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THE VICAR OF BULLHAMPTON

THE
VICAR OF BULLHAMPTON

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

FRONTISPIECE BY
WALTER H. EVERETT

VOL. II.

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The Vicar of Bullhampton

CHAPTER I

A LOVER'S MADNESS

THE letter from Mrs. Fenwick, which the reader has just seen, was the immediate effect of a special visit which Mr. Gilmore had made to her. On the 10th of March he had come to her with a settled purpose, pointing out to her that he had now waited a certain number of months since he had heard of the rupture between Mary and her cousin, naming the exact period which Mrs. Fenwick had bade him wait before he should move again in the matter, and asking her whether he might not now venture to take some steps. Mrs. Fenwick had felt it to be unfair that her very words should be quoted against her, as to the three or four months, feeling that she had said three or four instead of six or seven to soften the matter to her friend; but, nevertheless, she had been induced to write to Mary Lowther.

"I was thinking that perhaps you might ask her to come to you again," Mr. Gilmore had said when Mrs. Fenwick rebuked him for his impatience. "If you did that, the thing might come on naturally."

"But she wouldn't come if I did ask her."

"Because she hates me so much that she will not venture to come near me?"

"What nonsense that is, Harry. It has nothing to do with hating. If I thought that she even disliked you, I should tell you so, believing that it would be

for the best. But of course if I asked her here just at present, she could not but remember that you are our nearest neighbour, and feel that she was pressed to come with some reference to your hopes."

"And therefore she would not come?"

"Exactly; and if you will think of it, how could it be otherwise? Wait till he is in India. Wait at any rate till the summer, and then Frank and I will do our best to get her here."

"I will wait," said Mr. Gilmore, and immediately took his leave, as though there were no other subject of conversation now possible to him.

Since his return from Loring, Mr. Gilmore's life at his own house had been quite secluded. Even the Fenwicks had hardly seen him, though they lived so near to him. He had rarely been at church, had seen no company at home since his uncle, the Prebendary, had left him, and had not dined even at the Vicarage more than once or twice. All this had of course been frequently discussed between Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick, and had made the Vicar very unhappy. He had expressed a fear that his friend would be driven half crazy by a foolish indulgence in a hopeless passion, and had suggested that it might perhaps be for the best that Gilmore should let his place and travel abroad for two or three years, so that, in that way, his disappointment might be forgotten. But Mrs. Fenwick still hoped better things than this. She probably thought more of Mary Lowther than she did of Harry Gilmore, and still believed that a cure for both their sorrows might be found, if one would only be patient, and the other would not despair.

Mr. Gilmore had promised that he would wait, and then Mrs. Fenwick had written her letter. To this

there came a very quick answer. In respect to the trouble about the chapel, Mary Lowther was sympathetic and droll, as she would have been had there been upon her the weight of no love misfortune. "She had trust," she said, "in Mr. Quickenham, who no doubt would succeed in harassing the enemy, even though he might be unable to obtain ultimate conquest. And then there seemed to be a fair prospect that the building would fall of itself, which surely would be a great triumph. And, after all, might it not fairly be hoped that the pleasantness of the Vicarage garden, which Mr. Puddleham must see every time he visited his chapel, might be quite as galling and as vexatious to him as would be the ugliness of the Methodist building to the Fenwicks?

"You should take comfort in the reflection that his sides will be quite as full of thorns as your own," said Mary; "and perhaps there may come some blessed opportunity for crushing him altogether by heaping hot coals of fire on his head. Offer him the use of the Vicarage lawn for one of his school tea-parties, and that, I should think, would about finish him."

This was all very well, and was written on purpose to show to Mrs. Fenwick that Mary could still be funny in spite of her troubles; but the pith of the letter, as Mrs. Fenwick well understood, lay in the few words of the last paragraph.

"Don't suppose, dear, that I am going to die of a broken heart. I mean to live and to be as happy as any of you. But you must let me go on in my own way. I am not at all sure that being married is not more trouble than it is worth."

That she was deceiving herself in saying this Mary knew well enough; and Mrs. Fenwick, too, guessed that it was so. Nevertheless, it was plain enough that

nothing more could be said about Mr. Gilmore just at present.

"You ought to blow him up, and make him come to us," Mrs. Fenwick said to her husband.

"It is all very well to say that, but one man can't blow another up, as women do. Men don't talk to each other about the things that concern them nearly,—unless it be about money."

"What do they talk about, then?"

"About matters that don't concern them nearly;—game, politics, and the state of the weather. If I were to mention Mary's name to him, he would feel it to be an impertinence. You can say what you please."

Soon after this, Gilmore came again to the Vicarage; but he was careful to come when the Vicar would not be there. He sauntered into the garden by the little gate from the churchyard, and showed himself at the drawing-room window, without going round to the front door. "I never go to the front now," said Mrs. Fenwick; "I have only once been through the gate since they began to build."

"Is not that very inconvenient?"

"Of course it is. When we came home from dining at Sir Thomas's the other day, I had myself put down at the church gate, and walked all the way round, though it was nearly pitch dark. Do come in, Harry."

Then Mr. Gilmore came in, and seated himself before the fire. Mrs. Fenwick understood his moods so well that she would not say a word to hurry him. If he chose to talk about Mary Lowther, she knew very well what she would say to him; but she would not herself introduce the subject. She spoke for awhile about the Brattles, saying that the old man had suffered much since his son had gone from him. Sam

had left Bullhampton at the end of January, never having returned to the mill after his visit to the Vicar, and had not been heard of since. Gilmore, however, had not been to see his tenant; and though he expressed an interest about the Brattles, had manifestly come to the Vicarage with the object of talking upon matters more closely interesting to himself.

"Did you write to Loring, Mrs. Fenwick?" he asked at last.

"I wrote to Mary soon after you were last here."

"And has she answered you?"

"Yes; she wrote again almost at once. She could not but write, as I had said so much to her about the chapel."

"She did not allude to—anything else, then?"

"I can't quite say that, Harry. I had written to her out of a very full heart, telling her what I thought as to her future life generally, and just alluding to our wishes respecting you."

"Well?"

"She said just what might have been expected,—that for the present she would rather be let alone."

"I have let her alone. I have neither spoken to her nor written to her. She does not mean to say that I have troubled her?"

"Of course you have not troubled her,—but she knows what we all mean."

"I have waited all the winter, Mrs. Fenwick, and have said not a word. How long was it that she knew her cousin before she was engaged to him?"

"What has that to do with it? You know what our wishes are; but, indeed, indeed, nothing can be done by hurrying her."

"She was engaged to that man, and the engagement

broken off all within a month. It was no more than a dream."

"But the remembrance of such dreams will not fade away quickly. Let us hope that hereafter it may be as a dream;—but time must be allowed to efface the idea of its reality."

"Time;—yes; but cannot we arrange some plan for the future? Cannot something be done? I thought you said you would ask her to come here?"

"So I did,—but not yet."

"Why shouldn't she come now? You needn't ask because I am here. There is no saying whom she may meet, and then my chance will be gone again."

"Is that all you know about women, Harry? Do you think that the girl whom you love so dearly will take up with one man after another in that fashion?"

"Who can say? She was not very long in taking up, as you call it, with Captain Marrable. I should be happier if she were here, even if I did not see her."

"Of course you would see her, and of course you would propose again,—and of course she would refuse you."

"Then there is no hope?"

"I do not say that. Wait till the summer comes; and then, if I can influence her, we will have her here. If you find that remaining at the Privets all alone is wearisome to you——"

"Of course it is wearisome."

"Then go up to London—or abroad—or anywhere for a change. Take some occupation in hand and stick to it."

"That is so easily said, Mrs. Fenwick."

"No man ever did anything by moping; and you

mope. I know I am speaking plainly, and you may be angry with me, if you please."

"I am not at all angry with you; but I think you hardly understand."

"I do understand," said Mrs. Fenwick, speaking with all the energy she could command; "and I am most anxious to do all that you wish. But it cannot be done in a day. If I were to ask her now, she would not come; and if she came it would not be for your good. Wait till the summer. You may be sure that no harm will be done by a little patience."

Then he went away, declaring again that he would wait with patience; but saying, at the same time, that he would remain at home. "As for going to London," he said, "I should do nothing there. When I find that there is no chance left, then probably I shall go abroad."

"It is my belief," said the Vicar, that evening, when his wife told him what had occurred, "that she will never have him; not because she does not like him, or could not learn to like him if he were as other men are, but simply because he is so unreasonably unhappy about her. No woman was ever got by that sort of puling and whining love. If it were not that I think him crazy, I should say that it was unmanly."

"But he is crazy."

"And will be still worse before he has done with it. Anything would be good now which would take him away from Bullhampton. It would be a mercy that his house should be burned down, or that some great loss should fall upon him. He sits there at home, and does nothing. He will not even look after the farm. He pretends to read, but I don't believe that he does even that."

"And all because he is really in love, Frank."

"I am very glad that I have never been in love with the same reality."

"You never had any need, sir. The plums fell into your mouth too easily."

"Plums shouldn't be too difficult," said the Vicar, "or they lose their sweetness."

A few days after this Mr. Fenwick was standing at his own gate, watching the building of the chapel and talking to the men, when Fanny Brattle from the mill came up to him. He would stand there by the hour at a time, and had made quite a friendship with the foreman of the builder from Salisbury, although the foreman, like his master, was a Dissenter, and had come into the parish as an enemy. All Bullhampton knew how infinite was the disgust of the Vicar at what was being done; and that Mrs. Fenwick felt it so strongly, that she would not even go in and out of her own gate. All Bullhampton was aware that Mr. Puddleham spoke openly of the Vicar as his enemy,—in spite of the peaches and cabbages on which the young Puddlehams had been nourished; and that the Methodist minister had, more than once within the last month or two, denounced his brother of the Established Church from his own pulpit. All Bullhampton was talking of the building of the chapel,—some abusing the Marquis and Mr. Puddleham and the Salisbury builder; others, on the other hand, declaring that it was very good that the Establishment should have a fall. Nevertheless there Mr. Fenwick would stand and chat with the men, fascinated after a fashion by the misfortune which had come upon him. Mr. Packer, the Marquis's steward, had seen him there, and had endeavoured to slink away unobserved,—for Mr. Packer was some-

what ashamed of the share he had had in the matter,—but Mr. Fenwick had called to him, and had spoken to him of the progress of the building.

"Grimes never could have done it so fast," said the Vicar.

"Well,—not so fast, Mr. Fenwick, certainly."

"I suppose it won't signify about the frost?" said the Vicar. "I should be inclined to think that the mortar will want repointing."

Mr. Packer had nothing to say to this. He was not responsible for the building. He endeavoured to explain that the Marquis had nothing to do with the work, and had simply given the land.

"Which was all that he could do," said the Vicar, laughing.

It was on the same day and while Packer was still standing close to him, that Fanny Brattle accosted him. When he had greeted the young woman and perceived that she wished to speak to him, he withdrew within his own gate, and asked her whether there was anything that he could do for her. She had a letter in her hand, and after a little hesitation she asked him to read it. It was from her brother, and had reached her by private means. A young man had brought it to her when her father was in the mill, and had then gone off, declining to wait for any answer.

"Father, sir, knows nothing about it as yet," she said.

Mr. Fenwick took the letter and read it. It was as follows:—

"Dear Sister,

"I want you to help me a little, for things is very bad with me. And it is not for me neither, or I'd

sooner starve nor ax for a sixpence from the mill. But Carry is bad too, and if you've got a trifle or so, I think you'd be of a mind to send it. But don't tell father, on no account. I looks to you not to tell father. Tell mother, if you will; but I looks to her not to mention it to father. If it be so you have two pounds by you, send it to me in a letter, to the care of

"Muster Thomas Craddock,
"Number 5, Crooked Arm Yard,
"Cowcross Street,
"City of London.

"My duty to mother, but don't say a word to father, whatever you do. Carry don't live nowhere there, nor they don't know her.

"Your affectionate brother,
"SAM BRATTLE."

"Have you told your father, Fanny?"

"Not a word, sir."

"Nor your mother?"

"Oh yes, sir. She has read the letter, and thinks I had better come to you to ask what we should do."

"Have you got the money, Fanny?"

Fanny Brattle explained that she had in her pocket something over the sum named, but that money was so scarce with them now, at the mill, that she could hardly send it without her father's knowledge. She would not, she said, be afraid to send it and then to tell her father afterwards. The Vicar considered the matter for some time, standing with the open letter in his hand, and then he gave his advice.

"Come into the house, Fanny," he said, "and write a line to your brother, and then get a money order at

the post-office for four pounds, and send it to your brother; and tell him that I lend it to him till times shall be better with him. Do not give him your father's money without your father's leave. Sam will pay me some day, unless I be mistaken in him."

Then Fanny Brattle with many grateful thanks did as the Vicar bade her.

CHAPTER II

THE THREE HONEST MEN

The Vicar of Bullhampton was—a "good sort of fellow." In praise of him to this extent it is hoped that the reader will cordially agree. But it cannot be denied that he was the most imprudent of men. He has done very much that was imprudent in respect to the Marquis of Trowbridge; and since he had been at Bullhampton had been imprudent in nearly everything that he had done regarding the Brattles. He was well aware that the bold words which he had spoken to the Marquis had been dragon's teeth sown by himself, and that they had sprung up from the ground in the shape of the odious brick building which now stood immediately in face of his own Vicarage gate. Though he would smile and be droll, and talk to the workmen, he hated that building quite as bitterly as did his wife. And now, in regard to the Brattles, there came upon him a great trouble. About a week after he had lent the four pounds to Fanny on Sam's behalf, there came to him a dirty note from Salisbury, written by Sam himself, in which he was told that Carry Brattle was now at the Three Honest Men, a public-house in one of the suburbs of the city, waiting there till Mr. Fenwick should find a home for her,—in accordance with his promise given to her brother. Sam, in his letter, had gone on to explain that it would be well that Mr. Fenwick should visit the Three Honest Men speedily, as otherwise there would be a bill there which neither

Carry nor Sam would be able to defray. Poor Sam's letter was bald, and they who did not understand his position might have called it bold. He wrote to the Vicar as though the Vicar's coming to Salisbury for the required purpose was a matter of course; and demanded a home for his sister without any reference to her future mode of life, or power of earning her bread, as though it was the Vicar's manifest duty to provide such home. And then that caution in regard to the bill was rather a threat than anything else. If you don't take her quickly from the Three Honest Men there'll be the very mischief of a bill for you to pay. That was the meaning of the caution, and so the Vicar understood it.

But Mr. Fenwick, though he was imprudent, was neither unreasonable nor unintelligent. He had told Sam Brattle that he would provide a home for Carry, if Sam would find his sister and induce her to accept the offer. Sam had gone to work, and had done his part. Having done it, he was right to claim from the Vicar his share of the performance. And then, was it not a matter of course that Carry, when found, should be without means to pay her own expenses? Was it to be supposed that a girl in her position would have money by her. And had not Mr. Fenwick known the truth about their poverty when he had given those four pounds to Fanny Brattle to be sent up to Sam in London? Mr. Fenwick was both reasonable and intelligent as to all this; and, though he felt that he was in trouble, did not for a moment think of denying his responsibility, or evading the performance of his promise. He must find a home for poor Carry, and pay any bill at the Three Honest Men which he might find standing there in her name.

Of course he told his trouble to his wife; and of course he was scolded for the promise he had given. "But, my dear Frank, if for her, why not for others; and how is it possible?"

"For her and not for others, because she is an old friend, a neighbour's child, and one of the parish." That question was easily answered.

"But how is it possible, Frank? Of course one would do anything that it is possible to save her. What I mean is, that one would do it for all of them, if only it were possible."

"If you can do it for one, will not even that be much?"

"But what is to be done? Who will take her? Will she go into a reformatory?"

"I fear not."

"There are so many, and I do not know how they are to be treated except in a body. Where can you find a home for her?"

"She has a married sister, Janet."

"Who would not speak to her, or let her inside the door of her house! Surely, Frank, you know the unforgiving nature of women of that class for such sin as poor Carry Brattle's?"

"I wonder whether they ever say their prayers," said the Vicar.

"Of course they do. Mrs. Jay, no doubt, is a religious woman. But it is permitted to them not to forgive that sin."

"By what law?"

"By the law of custom. It is all very well, Frank, but you can't fight against it. At any rate, you can't ignore it till it has been fought against and conquered. And it is useful. It keeps women from going astray."

"You think, then, that nothing should be done for this poor creature, who fell so piteously, with so small a sin?"

"I have not said so. But when you promised her a home, where did you think of finding one for her? Her only fitting home is with her mother, and you know that her father will not take her there."

Mr. Fenwick said nothing more at that moment, not having clearly made up his mind as to what he might best do; but he had before his eyes, dimly, a plan by which he thought it possible that he might force Carry Brattle on her father's heart. If this plan might be carried out, he would take her to the mill-house and seat her in the room in which the family lived, and then bring the old man in from his work. It might be that Jacob Brattle, in his wrath, would turn with violence upon the man who had dared thus to interfere in the affairs of his family; but he would certainly offer no rough usage to the poor girl. Fenwick knew the man well enough to be sure that he would not lay his hands in anger upon a woman.

But something must be done at once,—something before any such plan as that which was running through his brain could be matured and carried into execution. There was Carry at the Three Honest Men, and, for aught the Vicar knew, her brother staying with her,—with his, the Vicar's credit, pledged for their maintenance. It was quite clear that something must be done. He had applied to his wife, and his wife did not know how to help him. He had suggested the wife of the ironmonger at Warminster as the proper guardian for the poor child, and his own wife had at once made him understand that this was impractical. Indeed, how was it possible that such a one as Carry

Brattle could be kept out of sight and stowed away in an open hardware-shop in a provincial town? The properest place for her would be in the country, on some farm; and, so thinking, he determined to apply to the girl's eldest brother.

George Brattle was a prosperous man, living on a large farm near Fordingbridge, ten or twelve miles the other side of Salisbury. Of him the Vicar knew very little, and of his wife nothing. That the man had been married fourteen or fifteen years, and had a family growing up, the Vicar did know; and, knowing it, feared that Mrs. Brattle of Startup, as their farm was called, would not be willing to receive this proposed new inmate. But he would try. He would go on to Startup after having seen Carry at the Three Honest Men, and use what eloquence he could command for the occasion.

He drove himself over on the next day to meet an early train, and was in Salisbury by nine o'clock. He had to ask his way to the Three Honest Men, and at last had some difficulty in finding the house. It was a small beershop, in a lane on the very outskirts of the city, and certainly seemed to him, as he looked at it, to be as disreputable a house, in regard to its outward appearance, as ever he had proposed to enter. It was a brick building of two stories, with a door in the middle of it which stood open, and a red curtain hanging across the window on the left-hand side. Three men dressed like navvies were leaning against the door-posts. There is no sign, perhaps, which gives to a house of this class so disreputable an appearance as red curtains hung across the window; and yet there is no other colour for pot-house curtains that has any popularity. The one fact probably explains the other.

A drinking-room with a blue or a brown curtain would offer no attraction to the thirsty navvy who likes to have his thirst indulged without criticism. But, in spite of the red curtain, Fenwick entered the house, and asked the uncomely woman at the bar after Sam Brattle. Was there a man named Sam Brattle staying there;—a man with a sister?

Then were let loose against the unfortunate clergyman the floodgates of a drunken woman's angry tongue. It was not only that the landlady of the Three Honest Men was very drunk, but also that she was very angry. Sam Brattle and his sister had been there, but they had been turned out of the house. There had manifestly been some great row, and Carry Brattle was spoken of with all the worst terms of reproach which one woman can heap upon the name of another. The mistress of the Three Honest Men was a married woman,—and, as far as that went, respectable; whereas poor Carry was not married, and certainly not respectable. Something of her past history had been known. She had been called names which she could not repudiate, and the truth of which even her brother on her behalf could not deny; and then she had been turned into the street. So much Mr. Fenwick learned from the drunken woman, and nothing more he could learn. When he asked after Carry's present address the woman jeered at him, and accused him of base purposes in coming after such a one. She stood with arms akimbo in the passage, and said she would raise the neighbourhood on him. She was drunk, and dirty, as foul a thing as the eye could look upon; every other word was an oath, and no phrase used by the lowest of men in their lowest of moments was too hot or too bad for her woman's tongue; and yet there was

the indignation of outraged virtue in her demeanour and in her language, because this stranger had come to her door asking after a girl who had been led astray. Our Vicar cared nothing for the neighbourhood, and, indeed, cared very little for the woman at all,—except in so far as she disgusted him; but he did care much at finding that he could obtain no clue to her whom he was seeking. The woman would not even tell him when the girl had left her house, or give him any assistance towards finding her. He had at first endeavoured to mollify the virago by offering to pay the amount of any expenses which might have been left unsettled; but even on this score he could obtain no consideration. She continued to revile him, and he was obliged to leave her,—which he did, at last, with a hurried step to avoid a quart pot which the woman had taken up to hurl at his head, upon some comparison which he most indiscreetly made between herself and poor Carry Brattle.

What should he do now? The only chance of finding the girl was, as he thought, to go to the police-office. He was still in the lane, making his way back to the street which would take him into the city, when he was accosted by a little child. "You be the parson," said the child. Mr. Fenwick owned that he was a parson. "Parson from Bull'umpton?" said the child, inquiringly. Mr. Fenwick acknowledged the fact. "Then you be to come with me." Whereupon Mr. Fenwick followed the child, and was led into a miserable little court in which population was squalid, thick, and juvenile. "She be here, at Mrs. Stiggs's," said the child. Then the Vicar understood that he had been watched, and that he was being taken to the place where she whom he was seeking had found shelter.

CHAPTER III

TROTTER'S BUILDINGS

In the back room up-stairs of Mr. Stiggs's house in Trotter's Buildings the Vicar did find Carry Brattle, and he found also that since her coming thither on the preceding evening,—for only on the preceding evening had she been turned away from the Three Honest Men, —one of Mrs. Stiggs's children had been on the look-out in the lane.

"I thought that you would come to me, sir," said Carry Brattle.

"Of course I should come. Did I not promise that I would come? And where is your brother?"

But Sam had left her as soon as he had placed her in Mrs. Stiggs's house, and Carry could not say whither he had gone. He had brought her to Salisbury, and had remained with her two days at the Three Honest Men, during which time the remainder of their four pounds had been spent; and then there had been a row. Some visitors to the house recognised poor Carry, or knew something of her tale, and evil words were spoken. There had been a fight and Sam had thrashed some man,—or some half-dozen men, if all that Carry said was true. She had fled from the house in sad tears, and after a while her brother had joined her,—bloody, with his lip cut and a black eye. It seemed that he had had some previous knowledge of this woman who lived in Trotter's Buildings,—had known her or her husband,—and there he had found

shelter for his sister, having explained that a clergyman would call for her and pay for her modest wants, and then take her away. She supposed that Sam had gone back to London; but he had been so bruised and mauled in the fight that he had determined that Mr. Fenwick should not see him. This was the story as Carry told it; and Mr. Fenwick did not for a moment doubt its truth.

"And now, Carry," said he, "what is it that you would do?"

She looked up into his face, and yet not wholly into his face,—as though she were afraid to raise her eyes so high,—and was silent. His were intently fixed upon her, as he stood over her, and he thought that he had never seen a sight more sad to look at. And yet she was very pretty,—prettier, perhaps, than she had been in the days when she would come up the aisle of his church, to take her place among the singers, with red cheeks and bright flowing clusters of hair. She was pale now, and he could see that her cheeks were rough,—from paint, perhaps, and late hours, and an ill-life; but the girl had become a woman, and the lines of her countenance were fixed, and were very lovely, and there was a pleading eloquence about her mouth for which there had been no need in her happy days at Bullhampton. He had asked her what she would do! But had she not come there, at her brother's instigation, that he might tell her what she should do? Had he not promised that he would find her a home if she would leave her evil ways? How was it possible that she should have a plan for her future life? She answered him not a word; but tried to look into his face and failed.

Nor had he any formed plan. That idea, indeed,

of going to Startup had come across his brain,—of going to Startup, and of asking assistance from the prosperous elder brother. But so diffident was he of success that he hardly dared to mention it to the poor girl.

"It is hard to say what you should do," he said.

"Very hard, sir."

His heart was so tender towards her that he could not bring himself to propose to her the cold and unpleasant safety of a Reformatory. He knew, as a clergyman and as a man of common sense, that to place her in such an establishment would, in truth, be the greatest kindness that he could do her. But he could not do it. He satisfied his own conscience by telling himself that he knew that she would accept no such refuge. He thought that he had half promised not to ask her to go to any such place. At any rate, he had not meant that when he had made his rash promise to her brother; and though that promise was rash, he was not the less bound to keep it. She was very pretty, and still soft, and he had loved her well. Was it a fault in him that he was tender to her because of her prettiness, and because he had loved her as a child? We must own that it was a fault. The crooked places of the world, if they are to be made straight at all, must be made straight after a sterner and a juster fashion.

"Perhaps you could stay here for a day or two?" he said.

"Only that I've got no money."

"I will see to that,—for a few days, you know. And I was thinking that I would go to your brother George."

"My brother George?"

"Yes;—why not? Was he not always good to you?"

"He was never bad, sir; only——"

"Only what?"

"I've been so bad, sir, that I don't think he'd speak to me, or notice me, or do anything for me. And he has got a wife, too."

"But a woman doesn't always become hard-hearted as soon as she is married. There must be some of them that will take pity on you, Carry." She only shook her head. "I shall tell him that it is his duty, and if he be an honest, God-fearing man, he will do it."

"And should I have to go there?"

"If he will take you—certainly. What better could you wish? Your father is hard, and though he loves you still, he cannot bring himself to forget."

"How can any of them forget, Mr. Fenwick?"

"I will go out at once to Startup, and as I return through Salisbury I will let you know what your brother says." She again shook her head. "At any rate, we must try, Carry. When things are difficult, they cannot be mended by people sitting down and crying. I will ask your brother; and if he refuses, I will endeavour to think of something else. Next to your father and mother, he is certainly the first that should be asked to look to you." Then he said much to her as to her condition, preached to her the little sermon with which he had come prepared; was as stern to her as his nature and love would allow,—though, indeed, his words were tender enough. He strove to make her understand that she could have no escape from the dirt and vileness and depth of misery into which she had fallen, without the penalty of a hard, laborious life, in which she must submit to be regarded as one

whose place in the world was very low. He asked her whether she did not hate the disgrace and the ignominy and the vile wickedness of her late condition. "Yes, indeed, sir," she answered, with her eyes still only half-raised towards him. What other answer could she make? He would fain have drawn from her some deep and passionate expression of repentance, some fervid promise of future rectitude, some eager offer to bear all other hardships, so that she might be saved from a renewal of the past misery. But he knew that no such eloquence, no such energy, no such ecstasy, would be forthcoming. And he knew, also, that humble, contrite, and wretched as was the girl now, the nature within her bosom was not changed. Were he to place her in a reformatory, she would not stay there. Were he to make arrangements with Mrs. Stiggs, who in her way seemed to be a decent, hard-working woman,—to make arrangements for her board and lodging, with some collateral regulations as to occupation, needle-work, and the like,—she would not adhere to them. The change from a life of fevered, though most miserable, excitement, to one of dull, pleasureless, and utterly uninteresting propriety, is one that can hardly be made without the assistance of binding control. Could she have been sent to the mill, and made subject to her mother's softness as well as to her mother's care, there might have been room for confident hope. And then, too,—but let not the reader read this amiss,—because she was pretty and might be made bright again, and because he was young, and because he loved her, he longed, were it possible, to make her paths pleasant for her. Her fall, her first fall had been piteous to him, rather than odious. He, too, would have liked to get hold of the man and to have

left him without a sound limb within his skin,—to have left him pretty nearly without a skin at all; but that work had fallen into the miller's hands, who had done it fairly well. And, moreover, it would hardly have fitted the Vicar. But, as regarded Carry herself, when he thought of her in his solitary rambles, he would build little castles in the air on her behalf, in which her life should be anything but one of sackcloth and ashes. He would find for her some loving husband, who should know and should have forgiven the sin which had hardly been a sin, and she should be a loving wife with loving children. Perhaps, too, he would add to this, as he built his castles, the sweet smiles of affectionate gratitude with which he himself would be received when he visited her happy hearth. But he knew that these were castles in the air, and he endeavoured to throw them all behind him as he preached his sermon. Nevertheless, he was very tender with her, and treated her not at all as he would have done an ugly young parishioner who had turned thief upon his hands.

"And now, Carry," he said, as he left her, "I will get a gig in the town, and will drive over to your brother. We can but try it. I am clear as to this, that the best thing for you will be to be among your own people."

"I suppose it would, sir; but I don't think she'll ever be brought to have me."

"We will try, at any rate. And if she will have you, you must remember that you must not eat the bread of idleness. You must be prepared to work for your living."

"I don't want to be idle, sir." Then he took her by the hand, and pressed it, and bade God bless her,

and gave her a little money in order that she might make some first payment to Mrs. Stiggs. "I'm sure I don't know why you should do all this for the likes of me, sir," said the girl, bursting into tears. The Vicar did not tell her that he did it because she was gracious in his eyes, and perhaps was not aware of the fact himself.

He went to the Dragon of Wantley, and there procured a gig. He had a contest in the inn-yard before they would let him have the gig without a man to drive him; but he managed it at last, fearing that the driver might learn something of his errand. He had never been at Startup Farm before; and knew very little of the man he was going to see on so very delicate a mission; but he did know that George Brattle was prosperous, and that in early life he had been a good son. His last interview with the farmer had had reference to the matter of bail required for Sam, and on that occasion the brother had, with some persuasion, done as he was asked. George Brattle had contrived to win for himself a wife from the Fordingbridge side of the country, who had had a little money; and as he, too, had carried away from the mill a little money in his father's prosperous days, he had done very well. He paid his rent to the day, owed no man anything, and went to church every other Sunday, eschewing the bad example set to him by his father in matters of religion. He was hard-fisted, ignorant, and self-confident, knowing much about corn and the grinding of it, knowing something of sheep and the shearing of them, knowing also how to get the worth of his ten or eleven shillings a week out of the bones of the rural labourers;—but knowing very little else. Of all this Fenwick was aware; and, in spite of that church-going

twice a month, rated the son as inferior to the father; for about the old miller there was a stubborn constancy which almost amounted to heroism. With such a man as was this George Brattle, how was he to preach a doctrine of true human charity with any chance of success? But the man was one who was pervious to ideas of duty, and might be probably pervious to feelings of family respect. And he had been good to his father and mother, regarding with something of true veneration the nest from which he had sprung. The Vicar did not like the task before him, dreading the disappointment which failure would produce; but he was not the man to shrink from any work which he had resolved to undertake, and drove gallantly into the farmyard, though he saw both the farmer and his wife standing at the back-door of the house.

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CHAPTER IV

STARTUP FARM

Farmer Brattle, who was a stout man about thirty-eight years of age, but looking as though he were nearly ten years older, came up to the Vicar, touching his hat, and then putting his hand out in greeting.

"This be a pleasure something like, Muster Fenwick, to see thee here at Startup. This be my wife. Molly, thou has never seen Muster Fenwick from Bull'umpton. This be our Vicar, as mother and Fanny says is the pick of all the parsons in Wiltshire."

Then Mr. Fenwick got down, and walked into the spacious kitchen, where he was cordially welcomed by the stout mistress of Startup Farm.

He was very anxious to begin his story to the brother alone. Indeed, as to that, his mind was quite made up; but Mrs. Brattle, who within the doors of that house held a position at any rate equal to that of her husband, did not seem disposed to give him the opportunity. She understood well enough that Mr. Fenwick had not come over from Bullhampton to shake hands with her husband, and to say a few civil words. He must have business, and that business must be about the Brattle family. Old Brattle was supposed to be in money difficulties, and was not this an embassy in search of money? Now Mrs. George Brattle, who had been born a Huggins, was very desirous that none of the Huggins money should be sent into the parish

of Bullhampton. When, therefore, Mr. Fenwick asked the farmer to step out with him for a moment, Mrs. George Brattle looked very grave, and took her husband apart and whispered a word of caution into his ear.

"It's about the mill, George; and don't you do nothing till you've spoke to me."

Then there came a solid look, almost of grief, upon George's face. There had been a word or two before this between him and the wife of his bosom as to the affairs of the mill.

"I've just been seeing somebody at Salisbury," began the Vicar, abruptly, as soon as they had crossed from the yard behind the house into the enclosure around the ricks.

"Some one at Salisbury, Muster Fenwick? Is it any one as I knows?"

"One that you did know well, Mr. Brattle. I've seen your sister Carry." Again there came upon the farmer's face that heavy look, which was almost a look of grief; but he did not at once utter a word. "Poor young thing!" continued the Vicar. "Poor, dear, unfortunate girl!"

"She brought it on herself, and on all of us," said the farmer.

"Yes, indeed, my friend. The light, unguarded folly of a moment has ruined her, and brought dreadful sorrow upon you all. But something should be done for her;—eh?"

Still the brother said nothing.

"You will help, I'm sure, to rescue her from the infamy into which she must fall if none help her?"

"If there's money wanted to get her into any of them places——," begun the farmer.

"It isn't that;—it isn't that, at any rate, as yet."

"What be it, then?"

"The personal countenance and friendship of some friend that loves her. You love your sister, Mr. Brattle?"

"I don't know as I does, Muster Fenwick."

"You used to, and you must still pity her."

"She's been and well-nigh broke the hearts of all on us. There wasn't one of us as wasn't respectable, till she come up;—and now there's Sam. But a boy as is bad ain't never so bad as a girl."

It must be understood that in the expression of this opinion Mr. Brattle was alluding, not to the personal wickedness of the wicked of the two sexes, but to the effect of their wickedness on those belonging to them.

"And therefore more should be done to help a girl."

"I'll stand the money, Muster Fenwick,—if it ain't much."

"What is wanted is a home in your own house."

"Here,—at Startup?"

"Yes; here, at Startup. Your father will not take her."

"Neither won't I. But it ain't me in such a matter as this. You ask my missus, and see what she'll say. Besides, Muster Fenwick, it's clean out of all reason."

"Out of all reason to help a sister?"

"So it be. Sister, indeed! Why did she go and make——. I won't say what she's made of herself. Ain't she brought trouble and sorrow enough upon us? Have her here! Why, I'm that angry with her, I shouldn't be keeping my hands off her. Why didn't she keep herself to herself, and not disgrace the whole family?"

Nevertheless, in spite of these strong expressions of opinion, Mr. Fenwick, by the dint of the bitter words which he spoke in reference to the brother's duty as a Christian, did get leave from the farmer to make the proposition to Mrs. George Brattle,—such permission as would have bound the brother to accept Carry, providing that Mrs. George would also consent to accept her. But even this permission was accompanied by an assurance that it woud not have been given had he not felt perfectly convinced that his wife would not listen for a moment to the scheme. He spoke of his wife almost with awe, when Mr. Fenwick left him to make this second attack. "She has never had nothing to say to none sich as that," said the farmer, shaking his head, as he alluded both to his wife and to his sister; "and I ain't sure as she'll be first-rate civil to any one as mentions sich in her hearing."

But Mr. Fenwick persevered, in spite even of this caution. When the Vicar re-entered the house, Mrs. George Brattle had retired to her parlour, and the kitchen was in the hands of the maid-servant. He followed the lady, however, and found that she had been at the trouble, since he had seen her last, of putting on a clean cap on his behalf. He began at once, jumping again into the middle of things by a reference to her husband.

"Mrs. Brattle," he said, "your husband and I have been talking about his poor sister Carry."

"The least said the soonest mended about that one, I'm afeared," said the dame.

"Indeed, I agree with you. Were she once placed in safe and kind hands, the less then said the better. She has left the life she was leading——"

"They never leaves it," said the dame.

"It is so seldom that an opportunity is given them. Poor Carry is at the present moment most anxious to be placed somewhere out of danger."

"Mr. Fenwick, if you ask me, I'd rather not talk about her;—I would indeed. She's been and brought a slur upon us all, the vile thing! If you ask me, Mr. Fenwick, there ain't nothing too bad for her."

Fenwick, who, on the other hand, thought that there could be hardly anything too good for his poor penitent, was beginning to be angry with the woman. Of course, he made in his own mind those comparisons which are common to us all on such occasions. What was the great virtue of this fat, well-fed, selfish, ignorant woman before him, that she should turn up her nose at a sister who had been unfortunate? Was it not an abominable case of the Pharisee thanking the Lord that he was not such an one as the Publican;—whereas the Publican was in a fair way to heaven?

"Surely you would have her saved, if it be possible to save her?" said the Vicar.

"I don't know about saving. If such as them is to be made all's one as others as have always been decent, I'm sure I don't know who it is as isn't to be saved."

"Have you never read of Mary Magdalen, Mrs. Brattle?"

"Yes, I have, Mr. Fenwick. Perhaps she hadn't got no father, nor brothers, and sisters, and sisters-in-law, as would be pretty well broken-hearted when her vileness would be cast up again' 'em. Perhaps she hadn't got no decent house over her head afore she begun. I don't know how that was."

"Our Saviour's tender mercy, then, would not have been wide enough for such sin as that." This the Vicar

said with intended irony; but irony was thrown away on Mrs. George Brattle.

"Them days and ours isn't the same, Mr. Fenwick, and you can't make 'em the same. And Our Saviour isn't here now to say who is to be a Mary Magdalen and who isn't. As for Carry Brattle, she has made her bed and she must lie upon it. We shan't interfere."

Fenwick was determined, however, that he would make his proposition. It was almost certain now that he could do no good to Carry by making it; but he felt that it would be a pleasure to him to make this self-righteous woman know what he conceived to be her duty in the matter. "My idea was this—that you should take her in here, and endeavour to preserve her from future evil courses."

"Take her in here?" shrieked the woman.

"Yes; here. Who is nearer to her than a brother?"

"Not if I know it, Mr. Fenwick; and if that is what you have been saying to Brattle, I must tell you that you've come on a very bad errand. People, Mr. Fenwick, knows how to manage things such as that for themselves in their own houses. Strangers don't usually talk about such things, Mr. Fenwick. Perhaps, Mr. Fenwick, you didn't know as how we have got girls of our own coming up. Have her in here—at Startup? I think I see her here!"

"But, Mrs. Brattle——"

"Don't Mrs. Brattle me, Mr. Fenwick, for I won't be so treated. And I must tell you that I don't think it over decent of you,—a clergyman, and a young man, too, in a way,—to come talking of such a one in a house like this."

"Would you have her starve, or die in a ditch?"

"There ain't no question of starving. Such as her don't starve. As long as it lasts, they've the best of eating and drinking,—only too much of it. There's prisons; let 'em go there if they means repentance. But they never does,—never, till there ain't nobody to notice 'em any longer; and by that time they're mostly thieves and pickpockets."

"And you would do nothing to save your own husband's sister from such a fate?"

"What business had she to be sister to any honest man? Think of what she's been and done to my children, who wouldn't else have had nobody to be ashamed of. There never wasn't one of the Hugginses who didn't behave herself;—that is of the women," added Mrs. George, remembering the misdeeds of a certain drunken uncle of her own, who had come to great trouble in a matter of horseflesh. "And now, Mr. Fenwick, let me beg that there mayn't be another word about her. I don't know nothing of such women, nor what is their ways, and I don't want. I never didn't speak a word to such a one in my life, and I certainly won't begin under my own roof. People knows well enough what's good for them to do and what isn't without being dictated to by a clergyman. You'll excuse me, Mr. Fenwick; but I'll just make bold to say as much as that. Good morning, Mr. Fenwick."

In the yard, standing close by the gig, he met the farmer again.

"You didn't find she'd be of your way of thinking, Muster Fenwick?"

"Not exactly, Mr. Brattle."

"I know'd she wouldn't. The truth is, Muster Fenwick, that young women as goes astray after that fashion is just like any sick animal, as all the animals

as ain't comes and sets upon immediately. It's just as well, too. They knows it beforehand, and it keeps 'em straight."

"It didn't keep poor Carry straight."

"And, by the same token, she must suffer, and so must we all. But, Muster Fenwick, as far as ten or fifteen pounds goes, if it can be of use——"

But the Vicar, in his indignation, repudiated the offer of money, and drove himself back to Salisbury with his heart full of sorrow at the hardness of the world. What this woman had been saying to him was only what the world had said to her,—the world that knows so much better how to treat an erring sinner than did Our Saviour when on earth.

He went with his sad news to Mrs. Stiggs's house, and then made terms for Carry's board and lodging, at any rate, for a fortnight. And he said much to the girl as to the disposition of her time. He would send her books, and she was to be diligent in needle-work on behalf of the Stiggs family. And then he begged her to go to the daily service in the cathedral,—not so much because he thought that the public worship was necessary for her, as that thus she would be provided with a salutary employment for a portion of her day. Carry, as she bade him farewell, said very little. Yes; she would stay with Mrs. Stiggs. That was all that she did say.

CHAPTER V

MR. QUICKENHAM, Q. C.

On the Thursday in Passion week, which fell on the 6th of April, Mr. and Mrs. Quickenham came to Bullhampton Vicarage. The lawyer intended to take a long holiday,—four entire days,—and to return to London on the following Tuesday; and Mrs. Quickenham meant to be very happy with her sister.

"It is such a comfort to get him out of town, if it's only for two days," said Mrs. Quickenham; "and I do believe he has run away this time without any papers in his portmanteau."

Mrs. Fenwick, with something of apology in her tone, explained to her sister that she was especially desirous of getting a legal opinion on this occasion from her brother-in-law.

"That's mere holiday work," said the barrister's anxious wife. "There's nothing he likes so much as that; but it is the reading of those horrible long papers by gaslight. I wouldn't mind how much he had to talk, nor yet how much he had to write, if it wasn't for all that weary reading. Of course he does have juniors with him now, but I don't find that it makes much difference. He's at it every night, sheet after sheet; and though he always says he's coming up immediately, it's two or three before he's in bed."

Mrs. Quickenham was three or four years older than her sister, and Mr. Quickenham was twelve years older than his wife. The lawyer therefore was considerably senior to the clergyman. He was at the

Chancery bar, and after the usual years of hard and almost profitless struggling, had worked himself up into a position in which his income was very large, and his labours never ending. Since the days in which he had begun to have before his eyes some idea of a future career for himself, he had always been struggling hard for a certain goal, struggling successfully, and yet never getting nearer to the thing he desired. A scholarship had been all in all to him when he left school; and, as he got it, a distant fellowship already loomed before his eyes. That attained was only a step towards his life in London. His first brief, anxiously as it had been desired, had given no real satisfaction. As soon as it came to him it was a rung of the ladder already out of sight. And so it had been all through his life, as he advanced upwards, making a business, taking a wife to himself, and becoming the father of many children. There was always something before him which was to make him happy when he reached it. His gown was of silk, and his income almost greater than his desires; but he would fain sit upon the Bench, and have at any-rate his evenings for his own enjoyment. He firmly believed now, that that had been the object of his constant ambition; though could he retrace his thoughts as a young man, he would find that in the early days of his forensic toils, the silent, heavy, unillumined solemnity of the judge had appeared to him to be nothing in comparison with the glittering audacity of the successful advocate. He had tried the one, and might probably soon try the other. And when that time shall have come, and Mr. Quickenham shall sit upon his seat of honour in the new Law Courts, passing long, long hours in the tedious labours of conscientious painful listening; then he will look

forward again to the happy ease of dignified retirement, to the coming time in which all his hours will be his own. And then, again, when those unfurnished hours are there, and with them shall have come the infirmities which years and toil shall have brought, his mind will run on once more to that eternal rest in which fees and salary, honours and dignity, wife and children, with all the joys of satisfied success, shall be brought together for him in one perfect amalgam which he will call by the name of Heaven. In the meantime, he has now come down to Bullhampton to enjoy himself for four days,—if he can find enjoyment without his law papers.

Mr. Quickenham was a tall, thin man, with eager gray eyes, and a long projecting nose, on which, his enemies in the courts of law were wont to say, that his wife could hang a kettle, in order that the unnecessary heat coming from his mouth might not be wasted. His hair was already grizzled, and, in the matter of whiskers, his heavy impatient hand had nearly altogether cut away the only intended ornament to his face. He was a man who allowed himself time for nothing but his law work, eating all his meals as though the saving of a few minutes in that operation were matter of vital importance, dressing and undressing at railroad speed, moving ever with a quick, impetuous step, as though the whole world around him went too slowly. He was short-sighted, too, and would tumble about in his unnecessary hurry, barking his shins, bruising his knuckles, and breaking most things that were breakable,—but caring nothing for his sufferings either in body or in purse so that he was not reminded of his awkwardness by his wife. An untidy man he was, who spilt his soup on his waistcoat and slobbered

with his tea, whose fingers were apt to be ink-stained, and who had a grievous habit of mislaying papers that were most material to him. He would bellow to the servants to have his things found for him, and would then scold them for looking. But when alone he would be ever scolding himself because of the faults which he thus committed. A conscientious, hardworking, friendly man he was, but one difficult to deal with; hot in his temper, impatient of all stupidities, impatient often of that which he wrongly thought to be stupidity, never owning himself to be wrong, anxious always for the truth, but often missing to see it, a man who would fret grievously for the merest trifle, and think nothing of the greatest success when it had once been gained. Such an one was Mr. Quickenham; and he was a man of whom all his enemies and most of his friends were a little afraid. Mrs. Fenwick would declare herself to be much in awe of him; and our Vicar, though he would not admit as much, was always a little on his guard when the great barrister was with him.

How it had come to pass that Mr. Chamberlaine had not been called upon to take a part in the Cathedral services during Passion week cannot here be explained; but it was the fact, that when Mr. Quickenham arrived at Bullhampton, the Canon was staying at The Privets. He had come over there early in the week, —as it was supposed by Mr. Fenwick with some hope of talking his nephew into a more reasonable state of mind respecting Miss Lowther; but, according to Mrs. Fenwick's uncharitable views, with the distinct object of escaping the long church services of the Holy week,—and was to return to Salisbury on the Saturday. He was, therefore, invited to meet Mr. Quickenham at dinner on the Thursday. In his own city and among

his own neighbours he would have thought it indiscreet to dine out in Passion week; but, as he explained to Mr. Fenwick, these things were very different in a rural parish.

Mr. Quickenham arrived an hour or two before dinner, and was immediately taken out to see the obnoxious building; while Mrs. Fenwick, who never would go to see it, described all its horrors to her sister within the guarded precincts of her own drawing-room.

"It used to be a bit of common land, didn't it?" said Mr. Quickenham.

"I hardly know what is common land," replied the Vicar. "The children used to play here, and when there was a bit of grass on it some of the neighbours' cows would get it."

"It was never advertised—to be let on building lease?"

"Oh, dear, no! Lord Trowbridge never did anything of that sort."

"I dare say not," said the lawyer. "I dare say not." Then he walked round the plot of ground, pacing it, as though something might be learned in that way. Then he looked up at the building with his hands in his pockets, and his head on one side. "Has there been a deed of gift,—perhaps a peppercorn rent, or something of that kind?" The Vicar declared that he was altogether ignorant of what had been done between the agent for the Marquis and the trustees to whom had been committed the building of the chapel. "I dare say nothing," said Mr. Quickenham. "They've been in such a hurry to punish you, that they've gone on a mere verbal permission. What's the extent of the glebe?"

"They call it forty-two acres."

"Did you ever have it measured?"

"Never. It would make no difference to me whether it is forty-one or forty-three."

"That's as may be," said the lawyer. "It's as nasty a thing as I've looked at for many a day, but it wouldn't do to call it a nuisance."

"Of course not. Janet is very hot about it; but, as for me, I've made up my mind to swallow it. After all, what harm will it do me?"

"It's an insult,—that's all."

"But if I can show that I don't take it as an insult, the insult will be nothing. Of course the people know that their landlord is trying to spite me."

"That's just it."

"And for awhile they'll spite me too, because he does. Of course it's a bore. It cripples one's influence, and to a certain degree spreads dissent at the cost of the Church. Men and women will go to that place merely because Lord Trowbridge favours the building. I know all that, and it irks me; but still it will be better to swallow it."

"Who's the oldest man in the parish?" asked Mr. Quickenham; "the oldest with his senses still about him." The parson reflected for awhile, and then said that he thought Brattle, the miller, was as old a man as there was there, with the capability left to him of remembering and of stating what he remembered. "And what's his age,—about?" Fenwick said that the miller was between sixty and seventy, and had lived in Bullhampton all his life. "A church-going man?" asked the lawyer. To this the Vicar was obliged to reply that, to his very great regret, old Brattle never entered a church. "Then I'll step over and see him during morning service to-morrow," said the lawyer.

The Vicar raised his eyebrows, but said nothing as to the propriety of Mr. Quickenham's personal attendance at a place of worship on Good Friday.

"Can anything be done, Richard?" said Mrs. Fenwick, appealing to her brother-in-law.

"Yes;—undoubtedly something can be done."

"Can there, indeed? I am so glad. What can be done?"

"You can make the best of it."

"That's just what I'm determined I won't do. It's mean-spirited, and so I tell Frank. I never would have hurt them as long as they treated us well; but now they are enemies, and as enemies I will regard them. I should think myself disgraced if I were to sit down in the presence of the Marquis of Trowbridge; I should, indeed."

"You can easily manage that by standing up when you meet him," said Mr. Quickenham. Mr. Quickenham could be very funny at times, but those who knew him would remark that whenever he was funny he had something to hide. His wife as she heard his wit was quite sure that he had some plan in his head about the chapel.

At half-past six there came Mr. Chamberlaine and his nephew. The conversation about the chapel was still continued, and the Canon from Salisbury was very eloquent, and learned also, upon the subject. His eloquence was brightest while the ladies were still in the room, but his learning was brought forth most manifestly after they had retired. He was very clear in his opinion that the Marquis had the law on his side in giving the land for the purpose in question, even if it could be shown that he was simply the lord of the manor, and not so possessed of the spot as to

do what he liked in it for his own purposes. Mr. Chamberlaine expressed his opinion that, although he himself might think otherwise, it would be held to be for the benefit of the community that the chapel should be built, and in no court could an injunction against the building be obtained.

"But he couldn't give leave to have it put on another man's ground," said the Queen's Counsel.

"There is no question of another man's ground here," said the member of the Chapter.

"I'm not so sure of that," continued Mr. Quickenham. "It may not be the ground of any one man, but if it's the ground of any ten or twenty it's the same thing."

"But then there would be a lawsuit," said the Vicar.

"It might come to that," said the Queen's Counsel.

"I'm sure you wouldn't have a leg to stand upon," said the member of the Chapter.

"I don't see that at all," said Gilmore. "If the land is common to the parish, the Marquis of Trowbridge cannot give it to a part of the parishioners because he is Lord of the Manor."

"For such a purpose I should think he can," said Mr. Chamberlaine.

"And I'm quite sure he can't," said Mr. Quickenham. "All the same, it may be very difficult to prove that he hasn't the right; and in the meantime there stands the chapel, a fact accomplished. If the ground had been bought and the purchasers had wanted a title, I think it probable the Marquis would never have got his money."

"There can be no doubt that it is very ungentlemanlike," said Mr. Chamberlaine.

"There I'm afraid I can't help you," said Mr.

Quickenham. "Good law is not defined very clearly here in England; but good manners have never been defined at all."

"I don't want anyone to help me on such a matter as that," said Mr. Chamberlaine, who did not altogether like Mr. Quickenham.

"I dare say not," said Mr. Quickenham; "and yet the question may be open to argument. A man may do what he likes with his own, and can hardly be called ungentlemanlike because he gives it away to a person you don't happen to like."

"I know what we all think about it in Salisbury," said Mr. Chamberlaine.

"It's just possible that you may be a little hypercritical in Salisbury," said Quickenham.

There was nothing else discussed and nothing else thought of in the Vicarage. The first of June had been the day now fixed for the opening of the new chapel, and here they were already in April. Mr. Fenwick was quite of opinion that if the services of Mr. Puddleham's congregation were once commenced in the building they must be continued there. As long as the thing was a thing not yet accomplished it might be practicable to stop it; but there could be no stopping it when the full tide of Methodist eloquence should have begun to pour itself from the new pulpit. It would then have been made the House of God,—even though not consecrated,—and as such it must remain. And now he was becoming sick of the grievance, and wished that it was over. As to going to law with the Marquis on a question of Common-right, it was a thing that he would not think of doing. The living had come to him from his college, and he had thought it right to let the Bursar of Saint John's know

what was being done; but it was quite clear that the college could not interfere or spend their money on a matter which, though it was parochial, had no reference to their property in the parish. It was not for the college, as patron of the living, to inquire whether certain lands belonged to the Marquis of Trowbridge or to the parish at large, though the Vicar no doubt, as one of the inhabitants of the place, might raise the question at law if he chose to find the money and could find the ground on which to raise it. His old friend the Bursar wrote him back a joking letter, recommending him to put more fire into his sermons and thus to preach his enemy down.

"I have become so sick of this chapel," the Vicar said to his wife that night, "that I wish the subject might never be mentioned again in the house."

"You can't be more sick of it than I am," said his wife.

"What I mean is, that I'm sick of it as a subject of conversation. There it is, and let us make the best of it, as Quickenham says."

"You can't expect anything like sympathy from Richard, you know."

"I don't want any sympathy. I want simply silence. If you'll only make up your mind to take it for granted, and to put up with it—as you had to do with the frost when the shrubs were killed, or with anything that is disagreeable but unavoidable, the feeling of unhappiness about it would die away at once. One does not grieve at the inevitable."

"But one must be quite sure that it is inevitable."

"There it stands, and nothing that we can do can stop it."

"Charlotte says that she is sure Richard has got

something in his head. Though he will not sympathise, he will think and contrive and fight."

"And half ruin us by his fighting," said the husband. "He fancies the land may be common land, and not private property."

"Then of course the chapel has no right to be there."

"But who is to have it removed? And if I could succeed in doing so, what would be said to me for putting down a place of worship after such a fashion as that?"

"Who could say anything against you, Frank?"

"The truth is, it is Lord Trowbridge who is my enemy here, and not the chapel or Mr. Puddleham. I'd have given the spot for the chapel, had they wanted it, and had I had the power to give it. I'm annoyed because Lord Trowbridge should know that he had got the better of me. If I can only bring myself to feel,—and you too,—that there is no better in it, and no worse, I shall be annoyed no longer. Lord Trowbridge cannot really touch me; and could he, I do not know that he would."

"I know he would."

"No, my dear. If he suddenly had the power to turn me out of the living I don't believe he'd do it,—any more than I would him of his estate. Men indulge in little injuries who can't afford to be wicked enough for great injustice. My dear, you will do me a great favour,—the greatest possible kindness,—if you'll give up all outer, and, as far as possible, all inner hostility to the chapel."

"Oh, Frank!"

"I ask it as a great favour,—for my peace of mind."

"Of course I will."

"There's my darling! It shan't make me unhappy any longer. What!—a stupid lot of bricks and mortar, that, after all, are intended for a good purpose,—to think that I should become a miserable wretch just because this good purpose is carried on outside my own gate. Were it in my dining-room, I ought to bear it without misery."

"I will strive to forget it," said his wife. And on the next morning, which was Good Friday, she walked to church, round by the outside gate, in order that she might give proof of her intention to keep her promise to her husband. Her husband walked before her; and as she went she looked round at her sister and shuddered and turned up her nose. But this was involuntary.

In the mean time Mr. Quickenham was getting himself ready for his walk to the mill. Any such investigation as this which he had on hand was much more compatible with his idea of a holiday than attendance for two hours at the Church Service. On Easter Sunday he would make the sacrifice,—unless a headache, or pressing letters from London, or Apollo in some other beneficent shape, might interfere and save him from the necessity. Mr. Quickenham, when at home, would go to church as seldom as was possible, so that he might save himself from being put down as one who neglected public worship. Perhaps he was about equal to Mr. George Brattle in his religious zeal. Mr. George Brattle made a clear compromise with his own conscience. One good Sunday against a Sunday that was not good left him, as he thought, properly poised in his intended condition of human infirmity. It may be doubted whether Mr. Quickenham's mind was equally philosophic on the

matter. He could hardly tell why he went to church, or why he stayed away. But he was aware when he went of the presence of some unsatisfactory feelings of imposture on his own part, and he was equally alive, when he did not go, to a sting of conscience in that he was neglecting a duty. But George Brattle had arranged it all in a manner that was perfectly satisfactory to himself.

Mr. Quickenham had inquired the way, and took the path to the mill along the river. He walked rapidly, with his nose in the air, as though it was a manifest duty, now that he found himself in the country, to get over as much ground as possible, and to refresh his lungs thoroughly. He did not look much as he went at the running river, or at the opening buds on the trees and hedges. When he met a rustic loitering on the path, he examined the man unconsciously, and could afterwards have described, with tolerable accuracy, how he was dressed; and he had smiled as he had observed the amatory pleasantness of a young couple, who had not thought it at all necessary to increase the distance between them because of his presence. These things he had seen, but the stream, and the hedges, and the twittering of the birds, were as nothing to him.

As he went he met old Mrs. Brattle making her weary way to church. He had not known Mrs. Brattle, and did not speak to her, but he had felt quite sure that she was the miller's wife. Standing with his hands in his pockets on the bridge which divided the house from the mill, with his pipe in his mouth, was old Brattle, engaged for the moment in saying some word to his daughter, Fanny, who was behind him. But she retreated as soon as she saw the stranger, and

the miller stood his ground, waiting to be accosted, suspicion keeping his hands deep down in his pockets, as though resolved that he would not be tempted to put them forth for the purpose of any friendly greeting. The lawyer saluted him by name, and then the miller touched his hat, thrusting his hand back into his pocket as soon as the ceremony was accomplished. Mr. Quickenham explained that he had come from the Vicarage, that he was brother-in-law to Mr. Fenwick, and a lawyer,—at each of which statements old Brattle made a slight projecting motion with his chin, as being a mode of accepting the information slightly better than absolute discourtesy. At the present moment Mr. Fenwick was out of favour with him, and he was not disposed to open his heart to visitors from the Vicarage. Then Mr. Quickenham plunged at once into the affair of the day.

"You know that chapel they are building, Mr. Brattle, just opposite to the parson's gate?"

Mr. Brattle replied that he had heard of the chapel, but had never, as yet, been up to see it.

"Indeed; but you remember the bit of ground?"

Yes;—the miller remembered the ground very well. Man and boy he had known it for sixty years. As far as his mind went he thought it a very good thing that the piece of ground should be put to some useful purpose at last.

"I'm not sure but what you may be right there," said the lawyer.

"It's not been of use,—not to nobody,—for more than forty year," said the miller.

"And before that what did they do with it?"

"Parson, as we had then in Bull'umpton, kep' a few sheep."

"Ah!—just so. And he would get a bit of feeding off the ground?" The miller nodded his head. "Was that the Vicar just before Mr. Fenwick?" asked the lawyer.

"Not by no means. There was Muster Brandon, who never come here at all, but had a curate who lived away to Hinton. He come after Parson Smallbones."

"It was Parson Smallbones who kept the sheep?"

"And then there was Muster Threepaway, who was parson well nigh thirty years afore Muster Fenwick come. He died up at Parsonage House, did Muster Threepaway."

"He didn't keep sheep?"

"No; he kep' no sheep as ever I heard tell on. He didn't keep much barring hisself,—didn't Muster Threepaway. He had never no child, nor yet no wife, nor nothing at all, hadn't Mr. Threepaway. But he was a good man as didn't go meddling with folk."

"But Parson Smallbones was a bit of a farmer?"

"Ay, ay. Parsons in them days warn't above a bit of farming. I warn't much more than a scrap of a boy, but I remember him. He wore a wig, and old black gaiters; and knew as well what was his'n and what wasn't as any parson in Wiltshire. Tithes was tithes then; and parson was cute enough in taking on 'em."

"But these sheep of his were his own, I suppose?"

"Whose else would they be, sir?"

"And did he fence them in on that bit of ground?"

"There'd be a boy with 'em, I'm thinking, sir. There wasn't so much fencing of sheep then as there be now. Boys was cheaper in them days."

"Just so; and the parson wouldn't allow other sheep there?"

"Muster Smallbones mostly took all he could get, sir."

"Exactly. The parsons generally did, I believe. It was the way in which they followed most accurately the excellent examples set them by the bishops. But, Mr. Brattle, it wasn't in the way of tithes that he had this grass for his sheep?"

"I can't say how he had it, nor yet how Muster Fenwick has the meadows t'other side of the river, which he lets to farmer Pierce; but he do have 'em, and farmer Pierce do pay him the rent."

"Glebe land, you know," said Mr. Quickenham.

"That's what they calls it," said the miller.

"And none of the vicars that came after old Smallbones have ever done anything with that bit of ground?"

"Ne'er a one on 'em. Mr. Brandon, as I tell 'ee, never come nigh the place. I don't know as ever I see'd him. It was him as they made Bishop afterwards, some'eres away in Ireland. He had a lord to his uncle. Then Muster Threepaway, he was here ever so long."

"But he didn't mind such things."

"He never owned no sheep; and the old 'oomen's cows was let to go on the land, as was best, and then the boys took to playing hopskotch there, with a horse or two over it at times, and now Mr. Puddleham has it for his preaching. Maybe, sir, the lawyers might have a turn at it yet;" and the miller laughed at his own wit.

"And get more out of it than any former occupant," said Mr. Quickenham, who would indeed have been very loath to allow his wife's brother-in-law to go into a law suit, but still felt that a very pretty piece of

litigation was about to be thrown away in this matter of Mr. Puddleham's chapel.

Mr. Quickenham bade farewell to the miller, and thought that he saw a way to a case. But he was a man very strongly given to accuracy, and on his return to the Vicarage said no word of his conversation with the miller. It would have been natural that Fenwick should have interrogated him as to his morning's work; but the Vicar had determined to trouble himself no further about his grievance, to say nothing further respecting it to any man, not even to allow the remembrance of Mr. Puddleham and his chapel to dwell in his mind; and consequently held his peace. Mrs. Fenwick was curious enough on the subject, but she had made a promise to her husband, and would at least endeavour to keep it. If her sister should tell her anything unasked, that would not be her fault.

CHAPTER VI

EASTER AT TURNOVER CASTLE

It was not only at Bullhampton that this affair of the Methodist chapel demanded and received attention. At Turnover also a good deal was being said about it, and the mind of the Marquis was not easy. As has been already told, the Bishop had written to him on the subject, remonstrating with him as to the injury he was doing the present vicar, and to future vicars, of the parish which he, as landlord, was bound to treat with beneficent consideration. The Marquis had replied to the Bishop with a tone of stern resolve. The Vicar of Bullhampton had treated him with scorn, nay, as he thought, with most unpardonable insolence, and he would not spare the Vicar. It was proper that the dissenters at Bullhampton should have a chapel, and he had a right to do what he liked with his own. So arguing with himself, he had written to the Bishop very firmly; but his own mind had not been firm within him as he did so. There were misgivings at his heart. He was a Churchman himself, and he was pricked with remorse as he remembered that he was spiting the Church which was connected with the state, of which he was so eminent a supporter. His own chief agent, too, had hesitated, and had suggested that perhaps the matter might be postponed. His august daughters, though they had learned to hold the name of Fenwick

in proper abhorrence, nevertheless were grieved about the chapel. Men and women were talking about it, and the words of the common people found their way to the august daughters of the house of Stowte.

"Papa," said Lady Carolina; "wouldn't it, perhaps, be better to build the Bullhampton chapel a little farther off from the Vicarage?"

"The next vicar might be a different sort of person," said the Lady Sophie.

"No; it wouldn't," said the Earl, who was apt to be very imperious with his own daughters, although he was of opinion that they should be held in great awe by all the world—excepting only himself and their eldest brother.

That eldest brother, Lord Saint George, was in truth, regarded at Turnover as being, of all persons in the world, the most august. The Marquis himself was afraid of his son, and held him in extreme veneration. To the mind of the Marquis the heir expectant of all the dignities of the House of Stowte was almost a greater man than the owner of them, and this feeling came not only from a consciousness on the part of the father that his son was a bigger man than himself, cleverer, better versed in the affairs of the world, and more thought of by those around them, but also to a certain extent from an idea that he who would have all these grand things thirty or perhaps even fifty years hence, must be more powerful than one with whom their possession would come to an end probably after the lapse of eight or ten years. His heir was to him almost divine. When things at the castle were in any way uncomfortable, he could put up with the discomfort for himself and his daughters; but it was not to be endured that Saint George should be incommoded.

Old carriage-horses must be changed if he were coming; the glazing of the new greenhouse must be got out of the way, lest he should smell the paint; the game must not be touched till he should come to shoot it. And yet Lord Saint George himself was a man who never gave himself any airs; and who in his personal intercourse with the world around him demanded much less acknowledgment of his magnificence than did his father.

And now, during this Easter week, Lord Saint George came down to the castle, intending to kill two birds with one stone, to take his parliamentary holiday, and to do a little business with his father. It not unfrequently came to pass that he found it necessary to repress the energy of his father's august magnificence. He would go so far as to remind his father that in these days marquises were not very different from other people, except in this, that they perhaps might have more money. The Marquis would fret in silence, not daring to commit himself to an argument with his son, and would in secret lament over the altered ideas of the age. It was his theory of politics that the old distances should be maintained, and that the head of a great family should be a patriarch, entitled to obedience from those around him. It was his son's idea that every man was entitled to as much obedience as his money would buy, and to no more. This was very lamentable to the Marquis; but nevertheless, his son was the coming man, and even this must be borne.

"I'm sorry about this chapel at Bullhampton," said the son to the father after dinner.

"Why sorry, Saint George? I thought you would have been of opinion that the dissenters should have a chapel."

"Certainly they should, if they're fools enough to want to build a place to pray in, when they have got one already built for them. There's no reason on earth why they shouldn't have a chapel, seeing that nothing that we can do will save them from schism."

"We can't prevent dissent, Saint George."

"We can't prevent it, because, in religion as in everything else, men like to manage themselves. This farmer or that tradesman becomes a dissenter because he can be somebody in the management of his chapel, and would be nobody in regard to the parish church."

"That is very dreadful."

"Not worse than our own people, who remain with us because it sounds the most respectable. Not one in fifty really believes that this or that form of worship is more likely to send him to heaven than any other."

"I certainly claim to myself to be one of the few," said the Marquis.

"No doubt; and so you ought, my lord, as every advantage has been given you. But, to come back to the Bullhampton chapel,—don't you think we could move it away from the parson's gate?"

"They have built it now, Saint George."

"They can't have finished it yet."

"You wouldn't have me ask them to pull it down? Packer was here yesterday, and said that the framework of the roof was up."

"What made them hurry it in that way? Spite against the Vicar, I suppose."

"He is a most objectionable man, Saint George; most insolent, overbearing, and unlike a clergyman. They say that he is little better than an infidel himself."

"We had better leave that to the Bishop, my lord."

"We must feel about it, connected as we are with the parish," said the Marquis.

"But I don't think we shall do any good by going into a parochial quarrel."

"It was the very best bit of land for the purpose in all Bullhampton," said the Marquis. "I made particular inquiry, and there can be no doubt of that. Though I particularly dislike that Mr. Fenwick, it was not done to injure him."

"It does injure him damnably, my lord."

"That's only an accident."

"And I'm not at all sure that we shan't find that we have made a mistake."

"How a mistake?"

"That we have given away land that doesn't belong to us."

"Who says it doesn't belong to us?" said the Marquis, angrily. A suggestion so hostile, so unjust, so cruel as this, almost overcame the feeling of veneration which he entertained for his son. "That is really nonsense, Saint George."

"Have you looked at the title deeds?"

"The title deeds are of course with Mr. Boothby. But Packer knows every foot of the ground,—even if I didn't know it myself."

"I wouldn't give a straw for Packer's knowledge."

"I haven't heard that they have even raised the question themselves."

"I'm told that they will do so,—that they say it is common land. It's quite clear that it has never been either let or enclosed."

"You might say the same of the bit of green that

lies outside the park gate,—where the great oak stands; but I don't suppose that that is common."

"I don't say that this is—but I do say that there may be difficulty of proof; and that to be driven to the proof in such a matter would be disagreeable."

"What would you do, then?"

"Take the bull by the horns, and move the chapel at our own expense to some site that shall be altogether unobjectionable."

"We should be then owning ourselves wrong, Augustus."

"And why not? I cannot see what disgrace there is in coming forward handsomely and telling the truth. When the land was given we thought it was our own. There has come up a shadow of a doubt, and sooner than be in the wrong, we give another site and take all the expense. I think that would be the right sort of thing to do."

Lord Saint George returned to town two days afterwards, and the Marquis was left with the dilemma on his mind. Lord Saint George, though he would frequently interfere in matters connected with the property in the manner described, would never dictate and seldom insist. He had said what he had got to say, and the Marquis was left to act for himself. But the old lord had learned to feel that he was sure to fall into some pit whenever he declined to follow his son's advice. His son had a painful way of being right that was a great trouble to him. And this was a question which touched him very nearly. It was not only that he must yield to Mr. Fenwick before the eyes of Mr. Puddleham and all the people of Bullhampton; but that he must confess his own ignorance as to the borders of his own property, and must abandon a bit of

land which he believed to belong to the Stowte estate. Now, if there was a point in his religion as to which Lord Trowbridge was more staunch than another, it was as to the removal of landmarks. He did not covet his neighbour's land; but he was most resolute that no stranger should, during his reign, ever possess a rood of his own.

CHAPTER VII

THE MARRABLES OF DUNRIPPLE

"If I were to go, there would be nobody left but you. You should remember that, Walter, when you talk of going to India." This was said to Walter Marrable at Dunripple, by his cousin Gregory, Sir Gregory's only son.

"And if I were to die in India, as I probably shall, who will come next?"

"There is nobody to come next for the title."

"But for the property?"

"As it stands at present, if you and I were to die before your father and Uncle John, the survivor of them would be the last in the entail. If they, too, died, and the survivor of us all left no will, the property would go to Mary Lowther. But that is hardly probable. When my grandfather made the settlement, on my father's marriage, he had four sons living."

"Should my father have the handling of it I would not give much for anybody's chance after him," said Walter.

"If you were to marry there would, of course, be a new settlement as to your rights. Your father could do no harm except as your heir,—unless, indeed, he were heir to us all. My Uncle John will outlive him, probably."

"My Uncle John will live for ever, I should think," said Walter Marrable.

This conversation took place between the two cousins

when Walter had been already two or three weeks at Dunripple. He had come there intending to stay over two or three days, and he had already accepted an invitation to make the house his home as long as he should remain in England. He had known but little of his uncle and nothing of his cousin, before this visit was made. He had conceived them to be unfriendly to him, having known them to be always unfriendly to his father. He was, of course, aware,—very well aware now, since he had himself suffered so grievously from his father's dishonesty,—that the enmity which had reached them from Dunripple had been well deserved. Colonel Marrable had, as a younger brother, never been content with what he was able to extract from the head of the family, who was, in his eyes, a milch cow that never ought to run dry. With Walter Marrable there had remained a feeling adverse to his uncle and cousin, even after he had been forced to admit to himself how many and how grievous were the sins of his own father. He had believed that the Dunripple people were stupid, and prejudiced, and selfish; and it had only been at the instance of his uncle, the parson, that he had consented to make the visit. He had gone there, and had been treated, at any rate, with affectoinate consideration. And he had found the house to be not unpleasant, though very quiet. Living at Dunripple there was a Mrs. Brownlow, a widowed sister of the late Lady Marrable, with her daughter, Edith Brownlow. Previous to this time Walter Marrable had never even heard of the Brownlows, so little had he known about Dunripple; and when he arrived there it had been necessary to explain to him who these people were.

He had found his uncle, Sir Gregory, to be much

such a man as he had expected in outward appearance and mode of life. The baronet was old and disposed to regard himself as entitled to all the indulgences of infirmity. He rose late, took but little exercise, was very particular about what he ate, and got through his day with the assistance of his steward, his novel, and occasionally of his doctor. He slept a great deal, and was never tired of talking of himself. Occupation in life he had none, but he was a charitable, honourable man, who had high ideas of what was due to others. His son, however, had astonished Walter considerably. Gregory Marrable the younger was a man somewhat over forty, but he looked as though he were sixty. He was very tall and thin, narrow in the chest, and so round in the shoulders as to appear to be almost humpbacked. He was so short-sighted as to be nearly blind, and was quite bald. He carried his head so forward that it looked as though it were going to fall off. He shambled with his legs, which seemed never to be strong enough to carry him from one room to another; and he tried them by no other exercise, for he never went outside the house except when, on Sundays and some other very rare occasions, he would trust himself to be driven in a low pony-phaeton. But in one respect he was altogether unlike his father. His whole time was spent among his books, and he was at this moment engaged in revising and editing a very long and altogether unreadable old English chronicle in rhyme, for publication by one of those learned societies which are rife in London. Of Robert of Gloucester, and William Langland, of Andrew of Wyntown and the Lady Juliana Berners, he could discourse, if not with eloquence, at least with enthusiasm. Chaucer was his favourite poet, and he was supposed to have

read the works of Gower in English, French, and Latin. But he was himself apparently as old as one of his own black-letter volumes, and as unfit for general use. Walter could hardly regard him as a cousin, declaring to himself that his uncle the parson, and his own father were, in effect, younger men than the younger Gregory Marrable. He was never without a cough, never well, never without various ailments and troubles of the flesh,—of which, however, he himself made but slight account, taking them quite as a matter of course. With such inmates the house no doubt would have been dull, had there not been women there to enliven it.

By degrees, too, and not by slow degrees, the newcomer found that he was treated as one of the family, —found that, after a certain fashion, he was treated as the heir to the family. Between him and the title and the estate there were but the lives of four old men. Why had he not known that this was so before he had allowed himself to be separated from Mary Lowther? But he had known nothing of it,—had thought not at all about it. There had been another Marrable, of the same generation with himself, between him and the succession, who might marry and have children, and he had not regarded his heirship as being likely to have any effect, at any rate upon his early life. It had never occurred to him that he need not go to India, because he would probably outlive four old gentlemen and become Sir Walter Marrable and owner of Dunripple.

Nor would he have looked at the matter in that light now had not his cousin forced the matter upon him. Not a word was said to him at Dunripple about Mary Lowther, but very many words were said about

his own condition. Gregory Marrable strongly advised him against going to India,—so strongly that Walter was surprised to find that such a man would have so much to say on such a subject. The young captain, in such circumstances, could not very well explain that he was driven to follow his profession in a fashion so disagreeable to him because, although he was heir to Dunripple, he was not near enough to it to be entitled to any allowance from its owner; but he felt that that would have been the only true answer when it was proposed to him to stay in England because he would some day become Sir Walter Marrable. But he did plead the great loss which he had encountered by means of his father's ill-treatment of him, and endeavoured to prove to his cousin that there was no alternative before him but to serve in some quarter of the globe in which his pay would be sufficient for his wants.

"Why should you not sell out, or go on half-pay, and remain here and marry Edith Brownlow?" said his cousin.

"I don't think I could do that," said Walter, slowly.

"Why not? There is nothing my father would like so much." Then he was silent for awhile, but, as his cousin made no further immediate reply, Gregory Marrable went on with his plan. "Ten years ago, when she was not much more than a little girl, and when it was first arranged that she should come here, my father proposed—that I should marry her."

"And why didn't you?"

The elder cousin smiled and shook his head, and coughed aloud as he smiled. "Why not, indeed? Well; I suppose you can see why not. I was an old man almost before she was a young woman. She is just

twenty-four now, and I shall be dead, probably, in two years' time."

"Nonsense."

"Twice since that time I have been within an inch of dying. At any rate, even my father does not look to that any longer."

"Is he fond of Miss Brownlow?"

"There is no one in the world whom he loves so well. Of course an old man loves a young woman best. It is natural that he should do so. He never had a daughter; but Edith is the same to him as his own child. Nothing would please him so much as that she should be the mistress of Dunripple."

"I'm afraid that it cannot be so," said Walter.

"But why not? There need be no India for you then. If you would do that you would be to my father exactly as though you were his son. Your father might, of course, outlive my father, and no doubt will outlive me, and then for his life he will have the place, but some arrangement could be made so that you should continue here."

"I'm afraid it cannot be so," said Walter. Many thoughts were passing through his mind. Why had he not known that these good things were so near to him before he had allowed Mary Lowther to go off from him? And, had it chanced that he had visited Dunripple before he had gone to Loring, how might it have been between him and this other girl? Edith Brownlow was not beautiful, not grand in her beauty as was Mary Lowther; but she was pretty, soft, lady-like, with a sweet dash of quiet pleasant humour,—a girl who certainly need not be left begging about the world for a husband. And this life at Dunripple was pleasant enough. Though the two elder Marrables

were old and infirm, Walter was allowed to do just as he pleased in the house. He was encouraged to hunt. There was shooting for him if he wished it. Even the servants about the place, the gamekeeper, the groom, and the old butler, seemed to have recognised him as the heir. There would have been so comfortable an escape from the dilemma into which his father had brought him,—had he not made his visit to Loring.

"Why not?" demanded Gregory Marrable.

"A man cannot become attached to a girl by order, and what right have I to suppose that she would accept me?"

"Of course she would accept you. Why not? Everybody around her would be in your favour. And as to not falling in love with her, I declare I do not know a sweeter human being in the world than Edith Brownlow."

Before the hunting season was over Captain Marrable had abandoned his intention of going to India, and had made arrangements for serving for awhile with his regiment in England. This he did after a discussion of some length with his uncle, Sir Gregory. During that discussion nothing was said about Edith Brownlow, and, of course, not a word was said about Mary Lowther. Captain Marrable did not even know whether his uncle or his cousin was aware that that engagement had ever existed. Between him and his uncle there had never been an allusion to his marriage, but the old man had spoken of his nearness to the property, and had expressed his regret that the last heir, the only heir likely to perpetuate the name and title, should take himself to India in the pride of his life. He made no offer as to money, but he told his nephew that there was a home for him if he would

give up his profession, or a retreat whenever his professional duties might allow him to visit it. Horses should be kept for him, and he should be treated in every way as a son of the family.

"Take my father at his word," said Gregory Marrable. "He will never let you be short of money."

After much consideration Walter Marrable did take Sir Gregory at his word, and abandoned for ever all idea of a further career in India.

As soon as he had done this he wrote to Mary Lowther to inform her of his decision. "It does seem hard," he said in his letter, "that an arrangement which is in so many respects desirable, should not have been compatible with one which is so much more desirable." But he made no renewed offer. Indeed he felt that he could not do so at the present moment, in honesty either to his cousin or to his uncle, as he had accepted their hospitality and acceded to the arrangements which they had proposed without any word on his part of such intention. A home had been offered to him at Dunripple, to him in his present condition, but certainly not a home to any wife whom he might bring there, nor a home to the family which might come afterwards. He thought that he was doing the best that he could with himself by remaining in England, and the best also towards a possible future renewal of his engagement with Mary Lowther. But of that he said nothing in his letter to her. He merely told her the fact as it regarded himself, and told that somewhat coldly. Of Edith Brownlow, and of the proposition in regard to her, of course he said nothing.

It was the intention both of Sir Gregory and his son that the new inmate of the house should marry Edith. The old man, who, up to a late date had

with weak persistency urged the match upon his son, had taken up the idea from the very first arrival of his nephew at Dunripple. Such an arrangement would solve all the family difficulties, and would enable him to provide for Edith as though she were indeed his daughter. He loved Edith dearly, but he could not bear that she should leave Dunripple, and it had grieved him sorely when he reflected that in coming years Dunripple must belong to relatives of whom he knew nothing that was good, and that Edith Brownlow must be banished from the house. If his son would have married Edith, all might have been well, but even Sir Gregory was at last aware that no such marriage as that could take place. Then had come the quarrel between the Colonel and the Captain, and the latter had been taken into favour. Colonel Marrable would not have been allowed to put his foot inside Dunripple House, so great was the horror which he had created. And the son had been feared too as long as the father and son were one. But now the father, who had treated the whole family vilely, had treated his own son most vilely, and therefore the son had been received with open arms. If only he could be trusted with Edith,—and if Edith and he might be made to trust each other,—all might be well. Of the engagement between Walter and Mary Lowther no word had ever reached Dunripple. Twice or thrice in the year a letter would pass between Parson John and his nephew, Gregory Marrable, but such letters were very short, and the parson was the last man in the world to spread the tittle-tattle of a love-story. He had always known that that affair would lead to nothing, and that the less said about it the better.

Walter Marrable was to join his regiment at Windsor

before the end of April. When he wrote to Mary Lowther to tell her of his plans he had only a fortnight longer for remaining in idleness at Dunripple. The hunting was over, and his life was simply idle. He perceived, or thought that he perceived, that all the inmates of the house, and especially his uncle, expected that he would soon return to them, and that they spoke of his work of soldiering as of a thing that was temporary. Mrs. Brownlow, who was a quiet woman, very reticent, and by no means inclined to interfere with things not belonging to her, had suggested that he would soon be with them again, and the housekeeper had given him to understand that his room was not to be touched. And then, too, he thought that he saw that Edith Brownlow was specially left in his way. If that were so it was necessary that the eyes of some one of the Dunripple party should be opened to the truth.

He was walking home with Miss Brownlow across the park from church one Sunday morning. Sir Gregory never went to church; his age was supposed to be too great, or his infirmities too many. Mrs. Brownlow was in the pony carriage driving her nephew, and Walter Marrable was alone with Edith. There had been some talk of cousinship,—of the various relationships of the family, and the like,—and of the way in which the Marrables were connected. They two, Walter and Edith, were not cousins. She was related to the family only by her aunt's marriage, and yet, as she said, she had always heard more of the Marrables than of the Brownlows.

"You never saw Mary Lowther?" Walter asked.

"Never."

"But you have heard of her?"

"I just know her name,—hardly more. The last time your uncle was here,—Parson John, we were talking of her. He made her out to be wonderfully beautiful."

"That was as long ago as last summer," said the Captain, reflecting that his uncle's account had been given before he and Mary Lowther had seen each other.

"Oh, yes;—ever so long ago."

"She is wonderfully beautiful."

"You know her, then, Captain Marrable?"

"I know her very well. In the first place, she is my cousin."

"But ever so distant?"

"We are not first cousins. Her mother was a daughter of General Marrable, who was a brother of Sir Gregory's father."

"It is so hard to understand, is it not? She is wonderfully beautiful, is she?"

"Indeed, she is."

"And she is your cousin—in the first place. What is she in the second place?"

He was not quite sure whether he wished to tell the story or not. The engagement was broken, and it might be a question whether, as regarded Mary, he had a right to tell it; and, then, if he did tell it, would not his reason for doing so be apparent? Was it not probable that he was expected to marry this girl, and that she would understand that he was explaining to her that he did not intend to carry out the general expectation of the family? And, then, was he sure that it might not be possible for him at some future time to do as he was desired?

"I meant to say that, as I was staying at Loring,

of course I met her frequently. She is living with a certain old Miss Marrable, whom you will meet some day."

"I have heard of her, but I don't suppose I ever shall meet her. I never go anywhere. I don't suppose there are such stay-at-home people in the world as we are."

"Why don't you get Sir Gregory to ask them here?"

"Both he and my cousin are so afraid of having strange women in the house; you know, we never have anybody here; your coming has been quite an event. Old Mrs. Potter seems to think that an era of dissipation is to be commenced because she has been called upon to open so many pots of jam to make pies for you."

"I'm afraid I have been very troublesome."

"Awfully troublesome. You can't think of all that had to be said and done about the stables! Do you have your oats bruised? Even I was consulted about that. Most of the people in the parish are quite disappointed because you don't go about in your full armour."

"I'm afraid it's too late now."

"I own I was a little disappointed myself when you came down to dinner without a sword. You can have no idea in what a state of rural simplicity we live here. Would you believe it? —for ten years I have never seen the sea, and have never been into any town bigger than Worcester,—unless Hereford be bigger. We did go once to the festival at Hereford. We have not managed Gloucester yet."

"You've never seen London?"

"Not since I was twelve years old. Papa died when I was fourteen, and we came here almost imme-

diately afterwards. Fancy, ten years at Dunripple! There is not a tree or a stone I don't know, and of course not a face in the parish."

She was very nice; but it was out of the question that she should ever become his wife. He had thought that he might explain this to herself by letting her know that he had within the last few months become engaged to, and had broken his engagement with, his cousin, Mary Lowther. But he found that he could not do it. In the first place, she would understand more than he meant her to understand if he made the attempt. She would know that he was putting her on her guard, and would take it as an insult. And then he could not bring himself to talk about Mary Lowther, and to tell their joint secrets. He was discontented with himself and with Dunripple, and he repented that he had yielded in respect to his Indian service. Everything had gone wrong with him. Had he refused to accede to Mary's proposition for a separation, and had he come to Dunripple as an engaged man, he might, he thought, have reconciled his uncle,—or at least his Cousin Gregory,—to his marriage with Mary. But he did not see his way back to that position now, having been entertained at his uncle's house as his uncle's heir for so long a time without having mentioned it.

At last he went off to Windsor, sad at heart, having received from Mary an answer to his letter, which he felt to be very cold, very discreet, and very unsatisfactory. She had merely expressed a fervent wish that whether he went to India or whether he remained in England, he might be prosperous and happy. The writer evidently intended that the correspondence should not be continued.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT SHALL I DO WITH MYSELF?

Parson John Marrable, though he said nothing in his letters to Dunripple about the doings of his nephew at Loring, was by no means equally reticent in his speech at Loring as to the doings at Dunripple. How he came by his news he did not say, but he had ever so much to tell. And Miss Marrable, who knew him well, was aware that his news was not simple gossip, but was told with an object. In his way, Parson John was a crafty man, who was always doing a turn of business. To his mind it was clearly inexpedient, and almost impracticable, that his nephew and Mary Lowther should ever become man and wife. He knew that they were separated; but he knew, also, that they had agreed to separate on terms which would easily admit of being reconsidered. He, too, had heard of Edith Brownlow, and had heard that if a marriage could be arranged between Walter and Edith, the family troubles would be in a fair way of settlement. No good could come to anybody from that other marriage. As for Mary Lowther, it was manifestly her duty to become Mrs. Gilmore. He therefore took some trouble to let the ladies at Uphill know that Captain Marrable had been received very graciously at Dunripple; that he was making himself very happy there, hunting, shooting, and forgetting his old troubles; that it was understood that he was to be recog-

nised as the heir;—and that there was a young lady in the case, the favourite of Sir Gregory.

He understood the world too well to say a word to Mary Lowther herself about her rival. Mary would have perceived his drift. But he expressed his ideas about Edith confidentially to Miss Marrable, fully alive to the fact that Miss Marrable would know how to deal with her niece. "It is by far the best thing that could have happened to him," said the parson. "As for going out to India again, for a man with his prospects it was very bad."

"But his cousin isn't much older than he is," suggested Miss Marrable.

"Yes, he is,—a great deal older. And Gregory's health is so bad that his life is not worth a year's purchase. Poor fellow! they tell me he only cares to live till he has got his book out. The truth is that if Walter could make a match of it with Edith Brownlow, they might arrange something about the property which would enable him to live there just as though the place were his own. The Colonel could be the only stumbling-block, and after what he has done, he could hardly refuse to agree to anything."

"They'd have to pay him," said Miss Marrable.

"Then he must be paid, that's all. My brother Gregory is wrapped up in that girl, and he would do anything for her welfare. I'm told that she and Walter have taken very kindly to each other already."

It would be better for Mary Lowther that Walter Marrable should marry Edith Brownlow. Such, at least, was Miss Marrable's belief. She could see that Mary, though she bore herself bravely, still did so as one who had received a wound for which there was no remedy;—as a man who has lost a leg and who never-

theless intends to enjoy life though he knows that he never can walk again. But in this case, the real bar to walking was the hope in Mary's breast,—a hope that was still present, though it was not nourished,—that the leg was not irremediably lost. If Captain Marrable would finish all that by marrying Edith, then,—so thought Miss Marrable,—in process of time the cure would be made good, and there might be another leg. She did not believe much in the Captain's constancy, and was quite ready to listen to the story about another love. And so from day to day words were dropped into Mary's ear which had their effect.

"I must say that I am glad that he is not to go to India," said Miss Marrable to her niece.

"So, indeed, am I," answered Mary.

"In the first place it is such an excellent thing that he should be on good terms at Dunripple. He must inherit the property some day, and the title too."

To this Mary made no reply. It seemed to her to have been hard that the real state of things should not have been explained to her before she gave up her lover. She had then regarded any hope of relief from Dunripple as being beyond measure distant. There had been a possibility, and that was all,—a chance to which no prudent man or woman would have looked in making their preparations for the life before them. That had been her idea as to the Dunripple prospects; and now it seemed that on a sudden Walter was to be regarded as almost the immediate heir. She did not blame him; but it did appear to be hard upon her.

"I don't see the slightest reason why he shouldn't live at Dunripple," continued Miss Marrable.

"Only that he would be dependent. I suppose he does not mean to sell out of the army altogether."

"At any rate, he may be backwards and forwards. You see, there is no chance of Sir Gregory's own son marrying."

"So they say."

"And his position would be really that of a younger brother in similar circumstances."

Mary paused a moment before she replied, and then she spoke out.

"Dear Aunt Sarah, what does all this mean? I know you are speaking at me, and yet I don't quite understand it. Everything between me and Captain Marrable is over. I have no possible means of influencing his life. If I were told to-morrow that he had given up the army and taken to living altogether at Dunripple, I should have no means of judging whether he had done well or ill. Indeed, I should have no right to judge."

"You must be glad that the family should be united."

"I am glad. Now, is that all?"

"I want you to bring yourself to think without regret of his probable marriage with this young lady."

"You don't suppose I shall blame him if he marries her."

"But I want you to see it in such a light that it shall not make you unhappy."

"I think, dear aunt, that we had better not talk of it. I can assure you of this, that if I could prevent him from marrying by holding up my little finger, I would not do it."

"It would be ten thousand pities," urged the old lady, "that either his life or yours should be a sacrifice

to a little episode, which, after all, only took a week or two in the acting."

"I can only answer for myself," said Mary. "I don't mean to be a sacrifice."

There were many such conversations, and by degrees they did have an effect upon Mary Lowther. She learned to believe that it was probable that Captain Marrable should marry Miss Brownlow, and, of course, asked herself questions as to the effect such a marriage would have upon herself, which she answered more fully than she did those which were put to her by her aunt. Then there came to Parson John some papers, which required his signature, in reference to the disposal of a small sum of money, he having been one of the trustees to his brother's marriage settlement. This was needed in regard to some provision which the baronet was making for his niece, and which, if read aright, would rather have afforded evidence against than in favour of the chance of her immediate marriage; but it was taken at Loring to signify that the thing was to be done, and that the courtship was at any rate in progress.

Mary did not believe all that she heard; but there was left upon her mind an idea that Walter Marrable was preparing himself for the sudden change of his affections. Then she determined that, should he do so, she would not judge him to have done wrong. If he could settle himself comfortably in this way, why should he not do so? She was told that Edith Brownlow was pretty, and gentle, and good, and would undoubtedly receive from Sir Gregory's hands all that Sir Gregory could give her. It was expedient, for the sake of the whole family, that such a marriage should be arranged. She would not stand in the way of it; and,

indeed, how could she stand in the way of it? Had not her engagement with Captain Marrable been dissolved at her own instance in the most solemn manner possible? Let him marry whom he might, she could have no ground of complaint on that score.

She was in this state of mind when she received Captain Marrable's letter from Dunripple. When she opened it, for a moment she thought that it would convey to her tidings respecting Miss Brownlow. When she had read it, she told herself how impossible it was that he should have told her of his new matrimonial intentions, even if he entertained them. The letter gave no evidence either one way or the other; but it confirmed to her the news which had reached her through Parson John, that her former lover intended to abandon that special career, his choice of which had made it necessary that they two should abandon their engagement. When at Loring he had determined that he must go to India, he had found it to be impossible that he should live without going to India. He had now been staying a few weeks at Dunripple with his uncle, and with Edith Brownlow, and it turned out that he need not go to India at all. Then she sat down, and wrote to him that guarded, civil, but unenthusiastic letter, of which the reader has already heard. She had allowed herself to be wounded and made so by what they had told her of Edith Brownlow.

It was still early in the spring, just in the middle of April, when Mary received another letter from her friend at Bullhampton, a letter which made her turn all these things in her mind very seriously. If Walter Marrable were to marry Edith Brownlow, what sort of future life should she, Mary Lowther, propose to herself? She was firmly resolved upon one thing, that it

behooved her to look rather to what was right than to what might simply be pleasant. But would it be right that she should consider herself to be, as it were, widowed by the frustration of an unfortunate passion? Life would still be left to her,—such a life as that which her aunt had lived,—such a life, with this exception, that whereas her aunt was a single lady with moderate means, she would be a single lady with very small means indeed. But that question of means did not go far with her; there was something so much more important that she could put that out of sight. She had told herself very plainly that it was a good thing for a woman to be married; that she would live and die unsuccessfully if she lived and died a single woman; that she had desired to do better with herself than that. Was it proper that she should now give up all such ambition because she had made a mistake? If it were proper, she would do so; and then the question resolved itself into this;—Could she be right if she married a man without loving him? To marry a man without esteeming him, without the possibility of loving him hereafter, she knew would be wrong.

Mrs. Fenwick's letter was as follows:—

"Vicarage, Tuesday.

"My Dear Mary,

"My brother-in-law left us yesterday, and has put us all into a twitter. He said, just as he was going away, that he didn't believe that Lord Trowbridge had any right to give away the ground, because it had not been in his possession or his family's for a great many years, or something of that sort. We don't clearly understand all about it, nor does he; but he is to find out something which he says he can find out, and then

let us know. But in the middle of all this, Frank declares that he won't stir in the matter, and that if he could put the abominable thing down by holding up his finger, he would not do it. And he has made me promise not to talk about it, and, therefore, all I can do is to be in a twitter. If that spiteful old man has really given away land that doesn't belong to him, simply to annoy us,—and it certainly has been done with no other object,—I think that he ought to be told of it. Frank, however, has got to be quite serious about it, and you know how very serious he can be when he is serious.

"But I did not sit down to write specially about that horrid chapel. I want to know what you mean to do in the summer. It is always better to make these little arrangements beforehand; and when I speak of the summer, I mean the early summer. The long and short of it is, will you come to us about the end of May?

"Of course, I know which way your thoughts will go when you get this, and, of course, you will know what I am thinking of when I write it; but I will promise that not a word shall be said to you to urge you in any way. I do not suppose you will think it right that you should stay away from friends whom you love, and who love you dearly, for fear of a man who wants you to marry him. You are not afraid of Mr. Gilmore, and I don't suppose that you are going to shut yourself up all your life because Captain Marrable has not a fortune of his own. Come at any rate. If you find it unpleasant you shall go back just when you please, and I will pledge myself that you shall not be harassed by persuasions.

"Yours most affectionately,

"Janet Fenwick.

"Frank has read this. He says that all I have said about his being serious is a tarradiddle; but that nothing can be more true than what I have said about your friends loving you, and wishing to have you here again. If you were here we might talk him over yet about the chapel." To which, in the Vicar's handwriting, was added the word, "Never!"

It was two days before she showed this letter to her aunt—two days in which she had thought much upon the subject. She knew well that her aunt would counsel her to go to Bullhampton, and, therefore, she would not mention the letter till she had made up her own mind.

"What will you do?" said her aunt.

"I will go, if you do not object."

"I certainly shall not object," said Miss Marrable.

Then Mary wrote a very short letter to her friend, which may as well, also, be communicated to the reader:—

"Loring, Thursday.

"DEAR JANET,

"I will go to you about the end of May; and yet, though I have made up my mind to do so, I almost doubt that I am not wise. If one could only ordain that things should be as though they had never been! That, however, is impossible, and one can only endeavour to live so as to come as nearly as possible to such a state. I know that I am confused; but I think you will understand what I mean.

"I intend to be very full of energy about the chapel, and I do hope that your brother-in-law will be able to prove that Lord Trowbridge has been misbehaving him-

self. I never loved Mr. Puddleham, who always seemed to look upon me with wrath because I belonged to the Vicarage; and I certainly should take delight in seeing him banished from the Vicarage gate.

"Always affectionately yours,

"MARY LOWTHER."

CHAPTER IX

MR. JAY OF WARMINSTER

The Vicar had undertaken to maintain Carry Brattle at Mrs. Stiggs's house, in Trotter's Buildings, for a fortnight, but he found at the end of the fortnight that his responsibility on the poor girl's behalf was by no means over. The reader knows with what success he had made his visit to Startup, and how far he was from ridding himself of his burden by the aid of the charity and affections of the poor girl's relatives there. He had shaken the Startup dust, as it were, from his gigwheels as he drove out of George Brattle's farmyard, and had declined even the offer of money which had been made. Ten or fifteen pounds! He would make up the amount of that offer out of his own pocket rather than let the brother think that he had bought off his duty to a sister at so cheap a rate. Then he convinced himself that in this way he owed Carry Brattle fifteen pounds, and comforted himself by reflecting that these fifteen pounds would carry the girl on a good deal beyond the fortnight; if only she would submit herself to the tedium of such a life as would be hers if she remained at Mrs. Stiggs's house. He named a fortnight both to Carry and to Mrs. Stiggs, saying that he himself would either come or send before the end of that time. Then he returned home, and told the whole story to his wife. All this took place before Mr Quickenham's arrival at the Vicarage.

"My dear Frank," said his wife to him, "you will get into trouble."

"What sort of trouble?"

"In the first place, the expense of maintaining this poor girl,—for life, as far as we can see,—will fall upon you."

"What if it does? But, as a matter of course, she will earn her bread sooner or later. How am I to throw her over? And what am I to do with her?"

"But that is not the worst of it, Frank."

"Then what is the worst of it? Let us have it at once."

"People will say that you, a clergyman and a married man, go to see a pretty young woman at Salisbury."

"You believe that people will say that?"

"I think you should guard against it, for the sake of the parish."

"What sort of people will say it?"

"Lord Trowbridge, and his set."

"On my honour, Janet, I think that you wrong Lord Trowbridge. He is a fool, and to a certain extent a vindictive fool; and I grant you that he has taken it into his silly old head to hate me unmercifully; but I believe him to be a gentleman, and I do not think that he would condescend to spread a damnably malicious report of which he did not believe a word himself."

"But, my dear, he will believe it."

"Why? How? On what evidence? He couldn't believe it. Let a man be ever such a fool, he can't believe a thing without some reason. I dislike Lord Trowbridge very much; and you might just as well say that because I dislike him I shall believe that he is a

hard landlord. He is not a hard landlord; and were he to stick dissenting chapels all about the county, I should be a liar and a slanderer were I to say that he was."

"But then, you see, you are not a fool, Frank."

This brought the conversation to an end. The Vicar was willing enough to turn upon his heel and say nothing more on a matter as to which he was by no means sure that he was in the right; and his wife felt a certain amount of reluctance in urging any arguments upon such a subject. Whatever Lord Trowbridge might say or think, her Frank must not be led to suppose that any unworthy suspicion troubled her own mind. Nevertheless, she was sure that he was imprudent.

When the fortnight was near at an end, and nothing had been done, he went again over to Salisbury. It was quite true that he had business there, as a gentleman almost always does have business in the county town where his banker lives, whence tradesmen supply him, and in which he belongs to some club. And our Vicar, too, was a man fond of seeing his Bishop, and one who loved to move about in the precincts of the cathedral, to shake hands with the dean, and to have a little subrisive fling at Mr. Chamberlaine, or such another as Mr. Chamberlaine, if the opportunity came in his way. He was by no means indisposed to go into Salisbury in the ordinary course of things; and on this occasion absolutely did see Mr. Chamberlaine, the dean, his saddler, and the clerk at the Fire Insurance Office,—as well as Mrs. Stiggs and Carry Brattle. If, therefore, anyone had said that on this day he had gone into Salisbury simply to see Carry Brattle, such person would have maligned him. He reduced the

premium on his Fire Insurance by 5*s.* 6*d.* a year, and he engaged Mr. Chamberlaine to meet Mr. Quickenham, and he borrowed from the Dean an old book about falconry; so that in fact the few minutes which he spent at Mrs. Stiggs's house was barely squeezed in among the various affairs of business which he had to transact at Salisbury.

All that he could say to Carry Brattle was this,—that hitherto he had settled nothing. She must stay in Trotter's Buildings for another week or so. He had been so busy, in consequence of the time of the year, preparing for Easter and the like, that he had not been able to look about him. He had a plan; but would say nothing about it till he had seen whether it could be carried out. When Carry murmured something about the cost of her living, the Vicar boldly declared that she need not fret herself about that, as he had money of hers in hand. He would some day explain all about that, but not now. Then he interrogated Mrs. Stiggs as to Carry's life. Mrs. Stiggs expressed her belief that Carry wouldn't stand it much longer. The hours had been inexpressibly long, and she had declared more than once that the best thing she could do was to go out and kill herself. Nevertheless, Mrs. Stiggs's report as to her conduct was favourable. Of Sam Brattle, the Vicar, though he inquired, could learn nothing. Carry declared that she had not heard from him since he left her all bruised and bleeding after his fight at the Three Honest Men.

The Vicar had told Carry Brattle that he had a plan,—but, in truth, he had no plan. He had an idea that he might overcome the miller by taking his daughter straight into his house, and placing the two face to face together; but it was one in which he him-

self put so little trust, that he could form no plan out of it. In the first place, would he be justified in taking such a step? Mrs. George Brattle had told him that people knew what was good for them without being dictated to by clergymen; and the rebuke had come home to him. He was the last man in the world to adopt a system of sacredotal interference. "I could do it so much better if I was not a clergyman," he would say to himself. And then, if old Brattle chose to turn his daughter out of the house, on such provocation as the daughter had given him, what was that to him, Fenwick, whether priest or layman? The old man knew what he was about, and had shown his determination very vigorously.

"I'll try the ironmonger at Warminster," he said, to his wife.

"I'm afraid it will be of no use."

"I don't think it will. Ironmongers are probably harder than millers or farmers,—and farmers are very hard. That fellow, Jay, would not even consent to be bail for Sam Brattle. But something must be done."

"She should be put into a reformatory."

"It would be too late now. That should have been done at once. At any rate, I'll go to Warminster. I want to call on old Dr. Dickleburg, and I can do that at the same time."

He did go to Warminster. He did call on the Doctor, who was not at home;—and he did call also upon Mr. Jay, who was at home.

With Mr. Jay himself his chance was naturally much less than it would be with George Brattle. The ironmonger was connected with the unfortunate young woman only by marriage; and what brother-in-law would take such a sister-in-law to his bosom? And of

Mrs. Jay he thought that he knew that she was puritanical, stiff, and severe. Mr. Jay he found in his shop along with an apprentice, but he had no difficulty in leading the master ironmonger along with him through a vista of pots, grates and frying pans, into a small recess at the back of the establishment, in which requests for prolonged credit were usually made, and urgent appeals for speedy payment as often put forth.

"Know the story of Caroline Brattle? Oh, yes! I know it, sir," said Mr. Jay. "We had to know it." And as he spoke he shook his head, and rubbed his hands together, and looked down upon the ground. There was, however, a humility about the man, a confession on his part, that in talking to an undoubted gentleman he was talking to a superior being, which gave to Fenwick an authority which he had felt himself to want in his intercourse with the farmer.

"I am sure, Mr. Jay, you will agree with me in that she should be saved if possible."

"As to her soul, sir?" asked the ironmonger.

"Of course, as to her soul. But we must get at that by saving her in this world first."

Mr. Jay was a slight man, of middle height, with very respectable iron-grey hair that stood almost upright upon his head, but with a poor, inexpressive, thin face below it. He was given to bowing a good deal, rubbing his hands together, smiling courteously, and to the making of many civil little speeches; but his strength as a leading man in Warminster lay in his hair, and in the suit of orderly, well-brushed black clothes which he wore on all occasions. He was, too, a man fairly prosperous, who went always to church, paid his way, attended seduously to his business, and hung his bells, and sold his pots in such a manner as

not actually to drive his old customers away by default of work.

"Jay is respectable, and I don't like to leave him," men would say, when their wives declared that the backs of his grates fell out, and that his nails never would stand hammering. So he prospered; but, perhaps, he owed his prosperity mainly to his hair. He rubbed his hands, and smiled, and bowed his head about, as he thought what answer he might best make. He was quite willing that poor Carry's soul should be saved. That would naturally be Mr. Fenwick's affair. But as to saving her body, with any co-operation from himself or Mrs. Jay,—he did not see his way at all through such a job as that.

"I'm afraid she is a bad 'un, Mr. Fenwick; I'm afraid she is," said Mr. Jay.

"The thing is, whether we can't put our heads together and make her less bad," said the Vicar. "She must live somewhere, Mr. Jay."

"I don't know whether almost the best thing for 'em isn't to die,—of course after they have repented, Mr. Fenwick. You see, sir, it is so very low, and so shameful, and they do bring such disgrace on their poor families. There isn't anything a young man can do that is nearly so bad,—is there, Mr. Fenwick?"

"I'm not at all sure of that, Mr. Jay."

"Ain't you, now?"

"I'm not going to defend Carry Brattle;—but if you will think how very small an amount of sin may bring a woman to this wretched condition, your heart will be softened. Poor Carry;—she was so bright, and so good and so clever!"

"Clever she was, Mr. Fenwick;—and bright, too, as you call it. But——"

"Of course we know all that. The question now is, what can we do to help her? She is living now, at this present moment, an orderly, sober life; but without occupation, or means, or friends. Will your wife let her come to her,—for a month or so, just to try her?"

"Come and live here!" exclaimed the ironmonger.

"That is what I would suggest. Who is to give her the shelter of a roof, if a sister will not?"

"I don't think that Mrs. Jay would undertake that," said the ironmonger, who had ceased to rub his hands and to bow, and whose face had now become singularly long and lugubrious.

"May I ask her?"

"It wouldn't do any good, Mr. Fenwick;—it wouldn't indeed."

"It ought to do good. May I try?"

"If you ask me, Mr. Fenwick, I should say no; indeed I should. Mrs. Jay isn't any way strong, and the bare mention of that disreputable connexion produces a sickness internally;—it does, indeed, Mr. Fenwick."

"You will do nothing, then, to save from perdition the sister of your own wife;—and will let your wife do nothing?"

"Now, Mr. Fenwick, don't be hard on me;—pray don't be hard on me. I have been respectable, and have always had respectable people about me. If my wife's family are turning wrong, isn't that bad enough on me without your coming to say such things as this to me? Really, Mr. Fenwick, if you'd think of it, you wouldn't be so hard."

"She may die in a ditch, then, for you?" said the Vicar, whose feeling against the ironmonger was much

stronger than it had been against the farmer. He could say nothing further, so he turned upon his heel and marched down the length of the shop, while the obsequious tradesman followed him,—again bowing and rubbing his hands, and attending him to his carriage. The Vicar didn't speak another word, or make any parting salutation to Mr. Jay. "Their hearts are like the nether millstone," he said to himself, as he drove away, flogging his horse. "Of what use are all the sermons? Nothing touches them. Do unto others as you think they would do unto you. That's their doctrine." As he went home he made up his mind that he would, as a last effort, carry out that scheme of taking Carry with him to the mill;—he would do so, that is, if he could induce Carry to accompany him. In the meantime, there was nothing left to him but to leave her with Mrs. Stiggs, and to pay ten shillings a week for her board and lodging. There was one point on which he could not quite make up his mind;—whether he would or would not first acquaint old Mrs. Brattle with his intention.

He had left home early, and when he returned his wife had received Mary Lowther's reply to her letter.

"She will come?" asked Frank.

"She just says that and nothing more."

"Then she'll be Mrs. Gilmore."

"I hope so, with all my heart," said Mrs. Fenwick.

"I look upon it as tantamount to accepting him. She wouldn't come unless she had made up her mind to take him. You mark my words. They'll be married before the chapel is finished."

"You say it as if you thought she oughtn't to come."

"No;—I don't mean that. I was only thinking how quickly a woman may recover from such a hurt."

"Frank, don't be ill-natured. She will be doing what all her friends advise."

"If I were to die, your friends would advise you not to grieve; but they would think you very unfeeling if you did not."

"Are you going to turn against her?"

"No."

"Then why do you say such things? Is it not better that she should make the effort than lie there helpless and motionless, throwing her whole life away? Will it not be much better for Harry Gilmore?"

"Very much better for him, because he'll go crazy if she don't."

"And for her, too. We can't tell what is going on inside her breast. I believe she is making a great effort because she thinks it is right. You will be kind to her when she comes?"

"Certainly I will,—for Harry's sake—and her own."

But in truth the Vicar at this moment was not in good humour. He was becoming almost tired of his efforts to set other people straight, so great were the difficulties that came in his way. As he had driven into his own gate he had met Mr. Puddleham, standing in the road just in front of the new chapel. He had made up his mind to accept the chapel, and now he said a pleasant word to the minister. Mr. Puddleham turned up his eyes and his nose, bowed very stiffly, and then twisted himself round, without answering a word. How was it possible for a man to live among such people in good humour and Christian charity?

In the evening he was sitting with his wife in the drawing-room, discussing all these troubles, when the maid came in to say that Constable Toffy was at the door.

Constable Toffy was shown into his study, and then the Vicar followed him. He had not spoken to the constable now for some months,—not since the time at which Sam had been liberated; but he had not a moment's doubt when he was thus summoned, that something was to be said as to the murder of Mr. Trumbull. The constable put his hand up to his head, and sat down at the Vicar's invitation, before he began to speak.

"What is it, Toffy?" said the Vicar.

"We've got 'em at last, I think," said Mr. Toffy, in a very low, soft voice.

"Got whom;—the murderers?"

"Just so, Mr. Fenwick; all except Sam Brattle,—whom we want."

"And who are the men?"

"Them as we supposed all along,—Jack Burrows, as they call the Grinder, and Lawrence Acorn as was along with him. He's a Birmingham chap, is Acorn. He's know'd very well at Birmingham. And then, Mr. Fenwick, there's Sam. That's all as seems to have been in it. We shall want Sam, Mr. Fenwick."

"You don't mean to tell me that he was one of the murderers?"

"We shall want him, Mr. Fenwick."

"Where did you find the other men?"

"They did get as far as San Francisco,—did the others. They haven't had a bad game of it,—have they, Mr. Fenwick? They've had more than seven months of a run. It was the 31st of August as Mr. Trumbull was murdered, and here's the 15th of April, Mr. Fenwick. There ain't a many runs as long as that. You'll have Sam Brattle for us all right, no doubt, Mr. Fenwick?" The Vicar told the constable that he would

see to it, and get Sam Brattle to come forward as soon as he could. "I told you all through, Mr. Fenwick, as Sam was one of them as was in it, but you wouldn't believe me."

"I don't believe it now," said the Vicar.

CHAPTER X

SAM BRATTLE IS WANTED

The next week was one of considerable perturbation, trouble and excitement at Bullhampton, and in the neighbourhood of Warminster and Heytesbury. It soon became known generally that Jack the Grinder and Lawrence Acorn were in Salisbury gaol, and that Sam Brattle—was wanted. The perturbation and excitement at Bullhampton were, of course, greater than elsewhere. It was necessary that the old miller should be told,—necessary also that the people at the mill should be asked as to Sam's present whereabouts. If they did not know it, they might assist the Vicar in discovering it. Fenwick went to the mill, taking the Squire with him; but they could obtain no information. The miller was very silent, and betrayed hardly any emotion when he was told that the police again wanted his son.

"They can come and search," he said. "They can come and search." And then he walked slowly away into the mill. There was a scene, of course, with Mrs. Brattle and Fanny, and the two women were in a sad way.

"Poor boy,—wretched boy!" said the unfortunate mother, who sat sobbing with her apron over her face.

"We know nothing of him, Mr. Gilmore, or we would tell at once," said Fanny.

"I'm sure you would," said the Vicar. "And you may remember this, Mrs. Brattle; I do not for one

moment believe that Sam had any more to do with the murder than you or I. You may tell his father that I say so, if you please."

For saying this the Squire rebuked him as soon as they had left the mill. "I think you go too far in giving such assurance as that," he said.

"Surely you would have me say what I think?"

"Not on such a matter as this, in which any false encouragement may produce so much increased suffering. You, yourself, are so prone to take your own views in opposition to those of others that you should be specially on your guard when you may do so much harm."

"I feel quite sure that he had nothing to do with it."

"You see that you have the police against you after a most minute and prolonged investigation."

"The police are asses," insisted the Vicar.

"Just so. That is, you prefer your own opinion to theirs in regard to a murder. I should prefer yours to theirs on a question of scriptural evidence, but not in such an affair as this. I don't want to talk you over, but I wish to make you careful with other people who are so closely concerned. In dealing with others you have no right to throw over the ordinary rules of evidence."

The Vicar accepted the rebuke and promised to be more careful,—repeating, however, his own opinion about Sam, to which he declared his intention of adhering in regard to his own conduct, let the police and magistrates say what they might. He also went so far as to declare that he should do so even in opposition to the verdict of a jury; but Gilmore understood that this was simply the natural obstinacy of the man, showing itself in its natural form.

At this moment, which was certainly one of gloom to the parish at large, and of great sorrow at the Vicarage, the Squire moved about with a new life which was evident to all who saw him. He went about his farm, and talked about his trees, and looked at his horses and had come to life again. No doubt many guesses as to the cause of this were made throughout his establishment, and some of them, probably, very near the truth. But, for the Fenwicks there was no need of guessing. Gilmore had been told that Mary Lowther was coming to Bullhampton in the early summer, and had at once thrown off the cloak of his sadness. He had asked no further questions; Mrs. Fenwick had found herself unable to express a caution; but the extent of her friend's elation almost frightened her.

"I don't look at it," she said to her husband, "quite as he does."

"She'll have him now," he answered, and then Mrs. Fenwick said nothing further.

To Fenwick himself this change was one of infinite comfort. The Squire was his old friend and almost his only near neighbour. In all his troubles, whether inside or outside of the parish, he naturally went to Gilmore; and, although he was a man not very prone to walk by the advice of his friends, still it had been a great thing to him to have a friend who would give an opinion, and perhaps the more so, as the friend was one who did not insist on having his opinion taken. During the past winter Gilmore had been of no use whatever to his friend. His opinions on all matters had gone so vitally astray, that they had not been worth having. And he had become so morose, that the Vicar had found it to be almost absolutely necessary to leave him

alone as far as ordinary life was concerned. But now the Squire was himself again, and on this exciting topic of Trumbull's murder, the prisoners in Salisbury gaol, and the necessity for Sam's reappearance, could talk sensibly and usefully.

It was certainly very expedient that Sam should be made to reappear as soon as possible. The idea was general in the parish that the Vicar knew all about him. George Brattle, who had become bail for his brother's reappearance, had given his name on the clear understanding that the Vicar would be responsible. Some half-sustained tidings of Carry's presence in Salisbury and of the Vicar's various visits to the city were current in Bullhampton, and with these were mingled an idea that Carry and Sam were in league together. That Fenwick was chivalrous, perhaps Quixotic, in his friendships for those whom he regarded, had long been felt, and this feeling was now stronger than ever. He certainly could bring up Sam Brattle if he pleased;—or, if he pleased, as might, some said, not improbably be the case, he could keep him away. There would be £400 to pay for the bail-bond, but the Vicar was known to be rich as well as Quixotic, and,—so said the Puddlehamites,—would care very little about that, if he might thus secure for himself his own way.

He was constrained to go over again to Salisbury in order that he might, if possible, learn from Carry how to find some trace of her brother, and of this visit the Puddlehamites also informed themselves. There were men and women in Bullhampton who knew exactly how often the Vicar had visited the young woman at Salisbury, how long he had been with her on each occasion, and how much he paid Mrs. Stiggs for the accommodation. Gentlemen who are Quixotic in their

kindness to young women are liable to have their goings and comings chronicled with much exactitude, if not always with accuracy.

His interview with Carry on this occasion was very sad. He could not save himself from telling her in part the cause of his inquiries. "They haven't taken the two men, have they?" she asked, with an eagerness that seemed to imply that she possessed knowledge on the matter which could hardly not be guilty.

"What two men?" he asked, looking full into her face. Then she was silent and he was unwilling to catch her in a trap, to cross-examine her as a lawyer would do, or to press out of her any communication which she would not make willingly and of her own free action. "I am told," he said, "that two men have been taken for the murder."

"Where did they find 'em, sir?"

"They had escaped to America, and the police have brought them back. Did you know them, Carry?" She was silent again. The men had not been named, and it was not for her to betray them. Hitherto, in their interviews, she had hardly ever looked him in the face, but now she turned her blue eyes full upon him. "You told me before, at the old woman's cottage," he said, "that you knew them both,—had known one too well."

"If you please, sir, I won't say nothing about 'em."

"I will not ask you, Carry. But you would tell me about your brother, if you knew?"

"Indeed I would, sir;—anything. He hadn't no more to do with Farmer Trumbull's murder nor you had. They can't touch a hair of his head along of that."

"Such is my belief;—but who can prove it?" Again she was silent. "Can you prove it? If speaking could

save your brother, surely you would speak out. Would you hesitate, Carry, in doing anything for your brother's sake? Whatever may be his faults, he has not been hard to you, like the others."

"Oh, sir, I wish I was dead."

"You must not wish that, Carry. And if you know ought of this you will be bound to speak. If you could bring yourself to tell me what you know, I think it might be good for both of you."

"It was they who had the money. Sam never seed a shilling of it."

"Who is 'they'?"

"Jack Burrows and Larry Acorn. And it wasn't Larry Acorn neither, sir. I know very well who did it. It was Jack Burrows who did it."

"That is he they call the Grinder?"

"But Larry was with him then," said the girl, sobbing.

"You are sure of that?"

"I ain't sure of nothing, Mr. Fenwick, only that Sam wasn't there at all. Of that I am quite, quite, quite sure. But when you asks me, what am I to say?"

Then he left her without speaking to her on this occasion a word about herself. He had nothing to say that would give her any comfort. He had almost made up his mind that he would take her over with him to the mill, and try what might be done by the meeting between the father, mother, and daughter, but all this new matter about the police and the arrest, and Sam's absence, made it almost impossible for him to take such a step at present. As he went, he again interrogated Mrs. Stiggs, and was warned by her that words fell daily from her lodger which made her think that the

young woman would not remain much longer with her. In the meantime there was nothing of which she could complain. Carry insisted on her liberty to go out and about the city alone; but the woman was of opinion that she did this simply with the object of asserting her independence. After that the necessary payment was made, and the Vicar returned to the Railway Station. Of Sam he had learned nothing, and now he did not know where to go for tidings. He still believed that the young man would come of his own accord, if the demand for his appearance were made so public as to reach his ear.

On that same day there was a meeting of the magistrates at Heytesbury, and the two men who had been so cruelly fetched back from San Francisco were brought before it. Mr. Gilmore was on the bench, along with Sir Thomas Charleys, who was the chairman, and three other gentlemen. Lord Trowbridge was in the court house, and sat upon the bench, but gave it out that he was not sitting there as a magistrate. Samuel Brattle was called upon to answer to his bail, and Jones, the attorney appearing for him, explained that he had gone from home to seek work elsewhere, alluded to the length of time that had elapsed, and to the injustice of presuming that a man against whom no evidence had been adduced should be bound to remain always in one parish,—and expressed himself without any doubt that Mr. Fenwick and Mr. George Brattle, who were his bailsmen, would cause him to be found and brought forward. As neither the clergyman nor the farmer were in court, nothing further could be done at once; and the magistrates were quite ready to admit that time must be allowed. Nor was the case at all ready against the two men who were in custody.

Indeed, against them the evidence was so little substantial that a lawyer from Devizes, who attended on their behalf, expressed his amazement that the American authorities should have given them up, and suggested that it must have been done with some view to a settlement of the Alabama claims. Evidence, however, was brought up to show that the two men had been convicted before, the one for burglary, and the other for horse-stealing; that the former, John Burrows, known as the Grinder, was a man from Devizes with whom the police about that town, and at Chippenham, Bath, and Wells, were well acquainted; that the other, Acorn, was a young man who had been respectable, as a partner in a livery stable at Birmingham, but who had taken to betting, and had for a year past been living by evil courses, having previously undergone two years of imprisonment with hard labour. It was proved that they had been seen in the neighbourhood both before and after the murder; that boots found in the cottage at Pycroft Common fitted certain footmarks in the mud of the farmer's yard; that Burrows had been supplied with a certain poison at a county chemist's at Lavington, and that the dog Bone'm had been poisoned with the like. Many other matters were proved, all of which were declared by the lawyer from Devizes to amount to nothing, and by the police authorities, who were prosecutors, to be very much. The magistrates, of course, ordered a remand, and ordered also that on the day named Sam Brattle should appear. It was understood that that day week was only named pro formâ, the constables having explained that at least a fortnight would be required for the collection of further evidence. This took place on Tuesday, the 25th of April, and it was understood that time

up to the 8th of May would be given to the police to complete their case.

So far all went on quietly at Heytesbury; but before the magistrates left the little town there was a row. Sir Thomas Charleys, in speaking to his brother magistrate, Mr. Gilmore, about the whole affair and about the Brattles in particular, had alluded to "Mr. Fenwick's unfortunate connexion with Carry Brattle" at Salisbury. Gilmore fired up at once, and demanded to know the meaning of this. Sir Thomas, who was not the wisest man in the world, but who had ideas of justice, and as to whom, in giving him his due, it must be owned that he was afraid of no one, after some hesitation, acknowledged that what he had heard respecting Mr. Fenwick had fallen from Lord Trowbridge. He had heard from Lord Trowbridge that the Vicar of Bullhampton was ***. Gilmore on the occasion became full of energy, and pressed the baronet very hard. Sir Thomas hoped that Mr. Gilmore was not going to make mischief. Mr. Gilmore declared that he would not submit to the injury done to his friend, and that he would question Lord Trowbridge on the subject. He did question Lord Trowbridge, whom he found waiting for his carriage, in the parlour of the Bull Inn, Sir Thomas having accompanied him in the search. The Marquis was quite outspoken. He had heard, he said, from what he did not doubt to be good authority, that Mr. Fenwick was in the habit of visiting alone a young woman who had lived in his parish, but whom he now maintained in lodgings in a low alley in the suburbs of Salisbury. He had said so much as that. In so saying, had he spoken truth or falsehood? If he had said anything untrue, he would be the first to acknowledge his own error.

Then there had come to be very hot words. "My lord," said Mr. Gilmore, "your insinuation is untrue. Whatever your words may have been, in the impression which they have made, they are slanderous."

"Who are you, sir," said the Marquis, looking at him from head to foot, "to talk to me of the impression of my words?"

But Mr. Gilmore's blood was up. "You intended to convey to Sir Thomas Charleys, my lord, that Mr. Fenwick's visits were of a disgraceful nature. If your words did not convey that, they conveyed nothing."

"Who are you, sir, that you should interpret my words? I did no more than my duty in conveying to Sir Thomas Charleys my conviction,—my well-grounded conviction,—as to the gentleman's conduct. What I said to him I will say aloud to the whole county. It is notorious that the Vicar of Bullhampton is in the habit of visiting a profligate young woman in a low part of the city. That I say is disgraceful to him, to his cloth, and to the parish, and I shall give my opinion to the Bishop to that effect. Who are you, sir, that you should question my words?" And again the Marquis eyed the Squire from head to foot, leaving the room with a majestic strut as Gilmore went on to assert that the allegation made, with the sense implied by it, contained a wicked and a malicious slander. Then there were some words, much quieter than those preceding them, between Mr. Gilmore and Sir Thomas, in which the Squire pledged himself to,—he hardly knew what, and Sir Thomas promised to hold his tongue,—for the present. But, as a matter of course, the quarrel flew all over the little town. It was out of the question that such a man as the Marquis of Trowbridge should keep his wrath confined. Before he had

left the inn-yard he had expressed his opinion very plainly to half-a-dozen persons, both as to the immorality of the Vicar and the impudence of the Squire; and as he was taken home his hand was itching for pen and paper in order that he might write to the Bishop. Sir Thomas shrugged his shoulders, and did not tell the story to more than three or four confidential friends, to all of whom he remarked that on the matter of the visits made to the girl, there never was smoke without fire. Gilmore's voice, too, had been loud, and all the servants about the inn had heard him. He knew that the quarrel was already public, and felt that he had no alternative but to tell his friend what had passed.

On that same evening he saw the Vicar. Fenwick had returned from Salisbury, tired, dispirited, and ill at ease, and was just going in to dress for dinner, when Gilmore met him at his own stable-door, and told him what had occurred.

"Then, after all, my wife was right and I was wrong," said Fenwick.

"Right about what?" Gilmore asked.

"She said that Lord Trowbridge would spread these very lies. I confess that I made the mistake of believing him to be a gentleman. Of course I may use your information?"

"Use it just as you please," said Gilmore. Then they parted, and Gilmore, who was on horseback, rode home.

CHAPTER XI

MARY LOWTHER RETURNS TO BULLHAMPTON

A MONTH went by after the scenes described in the last chapter, and summer had come at Bullhampton. It was now the end of May, and, with the summer, Mary Lowther had arrived. During the month very little progress had been made with the case at Heytesbury. There had been two or three remands, and now there was yet another. The police declared that this was rendered necessary by the absence of Sam Brattle,—that the magistrates were anxious to give all reasonable time for the production of the man who was out upon bail,—and that, as he was undoubtedly concerned in the murder, they were determined to have him. But they who professed to understand the case, among whom were the lawyer from Devizes and Mr. Jones of Heytesbury, declared that no real search had been made for Brattle because the evidence in regard to the other men was hitherto inefficient. The remand now stood again till Tuesday, June the 5th, and it was understood that if Brattle did not then appear the bail would be declared to have been forfeited.

Fenwick had written a very angry letter to Lord Trowbridge, to which he had got no answer, and Lord Trowbridge had written a very silly letter to the Bishop, in replying to which the Bishop had snubbed him. "I am informed by my friend, Mr. Gilmore," said the Vicar to the Marquis, "that your lordship has stated openly that I have made visits to a young woman in Salisbury which are disgraceful to me, to my cloth, and

to the parish of which I am the incumbent. I do not believe that your lordship will deny that you have done so, and I, therefore, call upon you at once to apologise to me for the calumny, which, in its nature, is as injurious and wicked as calumny can be, and to promise that you will not repeat the offence." The Marquis, when he received this, had not as yet written that letter to the Bishop on which he had resolved after his interview with Gilmore,—feeling, perhaps, some qualms of conscience, thinking that it might be well that he should consult his son,—though with a full conviction that, if he did so, his son would not allow him to write to the Bishop at all,—possibly with some feeling that he had been too hard upon his enemy, the Vicar. But, when the letter from Bullhampton reached him, all feelings of doubt, caution, and mercy, were thrown to the winds. The tone of the letter was essentially aggressive and impudent. It was the word calumny that offended him most, that, and the idea that he, the Marquis of Trowbridge, should be called upon to promise not to commit an offence! The pestilent infidel at Bullhampton, as he called our friend, had not attempted to deny the visits to the young woman at Salisbury. And the Marquis had made fresh inquiry which had completely corroborated his previous information. He had learned Mrs. Stiggs's address, the name of Trotter's Buildings, which details were to his mind circumstantial, corroborative, and damnatory. Some dim account of the battle at the Three Honest Men had reached him, and the undoubted fact that Carry Brattle was maintained by the Vicar. Then he remembered all Fenwick's old anxiety on behalf of the brother, whom the Marquis had taught himself to regard as the very man who had murdered his tenant. He reminded himself, too, of

the murderer's present escape from injustice by aid of this pestilent clergyman; and thus became convinced that in dealing with Mr. Fenwick, as it was his undoubted duty to do, he had to deal with one of the very worst of the human race. His lordship's mind was one utterly incapable of sifting evidence,—unable even to understand evidence when it came to him. He was not a bad man. He desired nothing that was not his own, and remitted much that was. He feared God, honoured the Queen, and loved his country. He was not self-indulgent. He did his duties as he knew them. But he was an arrogant old fool, who could not keep himself from mischief,—who could only be kept from mischief by the aid of some such master as his son. As soon as he received the Vicar's letter he at once sat down and wrote to the Bishop. He was so sure that he was right, that he sent Fenwick's letter to the Bishop, acknowledging what he himself had said at Heytesbury, and justifying it altogether by an elaborate account of the Vicar's wickedness. "And now, my lord, let me ask you," said he, in conclusion, "whether you deem this a proper man to have the care of souls in the large and important parish of Bullhampton."

The Bishop felt himself to be very much bullied. He had no doubt whatsoever about his parson. He knew that Fenwick was too strong a man to be acted upon beneficially by such advice as to his private conduct as a Bishop might give, and too good a man to need any caution as to his conduct. "My Lord Marquis," he said, in reply, "in returning the endorsed letter from Mr. Fenwick to your lordship, I can only say that nothing has been brought before me by your lordship which seems to me to require my interference. I should be wrong if I did not add to this the expres-

sion of my opinion that Mr. Fenwick is a moral man, doing his duty in his parish well, and an example in my diocese to be followed, rather than a stumbling-block."

When this letter reached the Castle Lord St. George was there. The poor old Marquis was cut to the quick. He immediately perceived,—so he told himself,—that the Bishop was an old woman, who understood nothing; but he was sure that St. George would not look at the matter in the same light. And yet it was impossible not to tell St. George. Much as he dreaded his son, he did honestly tell everything to his Mentor. He had already told St. George of Fenwick's letter to him and of his letter to the Bishop, and George had whistled. Now he showed the Bishop's letter to his son. St. George read the letter, refolded it slowly, shrugged his shoulders, and said, as he returned it to his father,—

"Well, my lord, I suppose you like a hornet's nest."

This was the uncomfortable position of things at Bullhampton about the beginning of June, at which time Mary Lowther was again staying with her friend Mrs. Fenwick. Carry Brattle was still at Salisbury, but had not been seen by the Vicar for more than a fortnight. The Marquis's letter, backed as it was in part by his wife's counsel, had, much to his own disgust, deterred him from seeing the girl. His wife, however, had herself visited Trotter's Buildings, and had seen Carry, taking to her a little present from her mother, who did not dare to go over to Salisbury to see her child, because of words that had passed between her and her husband.

Mrs. Fenwick, on her return home, had reported that Carry was silent, sullen, and idle; that her only speech was an expression of a wish that she was dead.

and that Mrs. Stiggs had said that she could get no good of her. In the meantime Sam Brattle had not yet turned up, and the 5th of June was at hand.

Mary Lowther was again at the vicarage, and of course it was necessary that she and Mr. Gilmore should meet each other. A promise had been made to her that no advice should be pressed upon her,—the meaning of which, of course, was that nothing should be said to her urging her to marry Mr. Gilmore. But it was of course understood by all the parties concerned that Mr. Gilmore was to be allowed to come to the house; and, indeed, this was understood by the Fenwicks to mean almost as plainly that she would at least endeavour to bring herself to accept him when he did come. To Mary herself, as she made the journey, the same meaning seemed to be almost inevitable; and as she perceived this, she told herself that she had been wrong to leave home. She knew,—she thought she knew,—that she must refuse him, and in doing so would simply be making fresh trouble. Would it not have been better for her to have remained at Loring, —to have put herself at once on a par with her aunt, and have commenced her life of solitary spinsterhood and dull routine? But, then, why should she refuse him? She endeavoured to argue it out with herself in the railway carriage. She had been told that Walter Marrable would certainly marry Edith Brownlow, and she believed it. No doubt it was much better that he should do so. At any rate, she and Walter were separated for ever. When he wrote to her, declaring his purpose of remaining in England, he had said not a word of renewing his engagement with her. No doubt she loved him. About that she did not for a moment endeavour to deceive herself.

No doubt, if that fate in life which she most desired might be hers, she would become the wife of Walter Marrable. But that fate would not be hers, and then there arose the question whether, on that account, she was unfit to be the wife of any other man. Of this she was quite certain, that should it ever seem to her to be her duty to accept the other man, she would first explain to him clearly the position in which she found herself. At last the whole matter resolved itself to this;—was it possible for her to divest her idea of life of all romance, and to look for contentment and satisfaction in the performance of duties to others? The prospect of an old maid's life at Loring was not pleasant to her eyes; but she would bear that, and worse than that, rather than do wrong. It was, however, so hard for her to know what was right and what was wrong! Supposing that she were to consent to marry Mr. Gilmore, would she be forsworn when at the altar she promised to love him? All her care would be henceforth for him, all her heart, as far as she could command her heart, and certainly all her truth. There should not be a secret of her mind hidden from him. She would force herself to love him, and to forget that other man. He should be the object of all her idolatry. She would, in that case, do her very utmost to reward him for the constancy of the affection with which he had regarded her; and yet, as she was driven in at the vicarage gate, she told herself that it would have been better for her to remain at Loring.

During the first evening Mr. Gilmore's name was not mentioned. There were subjects enough for conversation, as the period was one of great excitement in Bullhampton.

"What did you think of our chapel?" asked Mrs. Fenwick.

"I had no idea it was so big."

"Why, they are not going to leave us a single soul to go to church. Mr. Puddleham means to make a clean sweep of the parish."

"You don't mean to say that any have left you?"

"Well; none as yet," replied Mrs. Fenwick. "But then the chapel isn't finished; and the Marquis has not yet sent his order to his tenants to become dissenters. We expect that he will do so, unless he can persuade the Bishop to turn Frank out of the living."

"But the Bishop couldn't turn him out."

"Of course, he couldn't,—and wouldn't if he could. The Bishop and Frank are the best friends in the world. But that has nothing to do with it. You mustn't abuse the chapel to Frank; just at this moment the subject is tabooed. My belief is that the whole edifice will have to come down, and that the confusion of Mr. Puddleham and the Marquis will be something more complete than ever was yet seen. In the meantime, I put my finger to my lip, and just look at Frank whenever the chapel is mentioned."

And then there was the matter of the murder, and the somewhat sad consideration of Sam's protracted absence.

"And will you have to pay four hundred pounds, Mr. Fenwick?" Mary asked.

"I shall be liable to pay it if he does not appear to-morrow, and no doubt must absolutely pay it if he does not turn up soon."

"But you don't think that he was one of them?"

"I am quite sure he was not. But he has had trouble in his family, and he got into a quarrel, and I

fancy he has left the country. The police say that he has been traced to Liverpool."

"And will the other men be convicted?" Mrs. Fenwick asked.

"I believe they will, and most fervently hope so. They have some evidence about the wheels of a small cart in which Burrows certainly, and, I believe, no doubt Acorn also, were seen to drive across Pycroft Common early on the Sunday morning. A part of the tire had come off, and another bit, somewhat broader, and an inch or so too short, had been substituted. The impress made by this wheel in the mud, just round the corner by the farm gate, was measured and copied at the time, and they say that this will go far to identify the men. That the man's cart was there is certain,—also that he was in the same cart at Pycroft Common an hour or two after the murder."

"That does seem clear," said Mary.

"But somebody suggests that Sam had borrowed the cart. I believe, however, that it will all come out; —only, if I have to pay four hundred pounds I shall think that Farmer Trumbull has cost me very dear."

On the next morning Gilmore came to the vicarage. It had been arranged that he would drive Fenwick over to Heytesbury, and that he would call for him after breakfast. A somewhat late hour,—two in the afternoon,—had been fixed for going on with the murder case, as it was necessary that a certain constable should come down from London on that morning; and, therefore, there would be no need for the two men to start very early from Bullhampton. This was explained to Mary by Mrs. Fenwick. "He dines here to-day," she had said when they met in the morning before prayers, "and you may as well get over the first awkwardness

at once." Mary had assented to this, and, after breakfast, Gilmore made his appearance among them in the garden. He was just one moment alone with the girl he loved.

"Miss Lowther," he said, "I cannot be with you for an instant without telling you that I am unchanged."

Mary made no reply, and he said nothing further. Mrs. Fenwick was with them so quickly that there was no need for a reply,—and then he was gone. During the whole day the two friends talked of the murder, and of the Brattles, and the chapel,—which was thoroughly inspected from the roof to the floor,—but not a word was said about the loves of Harry Gilmore or Walter Marrable. Gilmore's name was often mentioned as the whole story was told of Lord Trowbridge's new quarrel, and of the correspondence with the Bishop,—of which Fenwick had learned the particulars from the Bishop's chaplain. And in the telling of this story Mrs. Fenwick did not scruple to express her opinion that Harry Gilmore had behaved well, with good spirit, and like a true friend. "If the Marquis had been anywhere near his own age I believe he would have horsewhipped him," said the Vicar's wife, with that partiality for the corporal chastisement of an enemy which is certainly not uncommon to the feminine mind. This was all very well, and called for no special remark from Mary, and possibly might have an effect.

The gentlemen returned late in the evening, and the Squire dressed at the vicarage. But the great event of the day had to be told before anyone was allowed to dress. Between four and five o'clock, just as the magistrates were going to leave the bench, Sam Brattle had walked into Court.

"And your money is safe?" said his wife.

"Yes, my money is safe; but, I declare, I think more of Sam's truth. He was there, as it seemed, all of a sudden. The police had learned nothing of him. He just walked into the court, and we heard his voice. 'They tell me I'm wanted,' he said; and so he gave himself up."

"And what was done?" asked his wife.

"It was too late to do anything; so they allowed a remand for another week, and Sam was walked off to prison."

At dinner time the conversation was still about the murder. It had been committed after Mary Lowther had left Bullhampton; but she had heard all the details, and was now as able to be interested about it as were the others. It was Gilmore's opinion that, instead of proceeding against Sam, they would put him into the witness-box and make him tell what he knew about the presence of the other two men. Fenwick declared that, if they did so, such was Sam's obstinacy that he would tell nothing. It was his own idea,—as he had explained both to his wife and to Gilmore,—that Carry Brattle could give more evidence respecting the murder than her brother. Of this he said nothing at present, but he had informed Constable Toffy that if Caroline Brattle were wanted for the examination she would be found at the house of Mrs. Stiggs.

Thus for an hour or two the peculiar awkwardness of the meeting between Harry Gilmore and Mary was removed. He was enabled to talk with energy on a matter of interest, she could join the conversation. But when they were round the tea-table it seemed to be arranged by common consent that Trumbull's murder and the Brattles should, for a while, be laid aside.

Then Mary became silent and Gilmore became awkward. When inquiries were made as to Miss Marrable, he did not know whether to seem to claim, or not to claim, that lady's acquaintance. He could not, of course, allude to his visit to Loring, and yet he could hardly save himself from having to acknowledge that he had been there. However, the hour wore itself away, and he was allowed to take his departure.

During the next two days he did not see Mary Lowther. On the Friday he met her with Mrs. Fenwick as the two were returning from the mill. They had gone to visit Mrs. Brattle and Fanny, and to administer such comfort as was possible in the present circumstances. The poor woman told them that the father was now as silent about his son as about his daughter, but that he had himself gone over to Heytesbury to secure legal advice for the lad, and to learn from Mr. Jones, the attorney, what might be the true aspect of the case. Of what he had learned he had told nothing to the women at the mill, but the two ladies had expressed their strong opinion of Sam's innocence. All this was narrated by Mrs. Fenwick to Gilmore, and Mary Lowther was enabled to take her part in the narrative.

The Squire was walking between the two, and it seemed to him as she walked that Mary at least had no desire to avoid him. He became high in hope, and began to wish that even now, at this moment, he might be left alone with her and might learn his fate. He parted from them when they were near the village, and as he went he held Mary's hand within his own for a few moments. There was no return of his pressure, but it seemed to him that her hand was left with him almost willingly.

"What do you think of him?" her friend said to her, as soon as he had parted from them.

"What do I think of him? I have always thought well of him."

"I know you have; to think otherwise of one who is positively so good would be impossible. But do you feel more kindly to him than you used?"

"Janet," said Mary, after pausing awhile, "you had better leave me alone. Don't be angry with me; but really it will be better that you should leave me alone."

"I won't be angry with you, and I will leave you alone," said Mrs. Fenwick. And, as she considered this request afterwards, it seemed to her that the very making of such a request implied a determination on the girl's part to bring herself to accept the man's offer, —if it might be possible.

CHAPTER XII

MARY LOWTHER'S DOOM

THE police were so very tedious in managing their business, and the whole affair of the second magisterial investigation was so protracted, that people in the neighbourhood became almost tired of it, in spite of that appetite for excitement which the ordinary quiet life of a rural district produces. On the first Tuesday in June Sam had surrendered himself at Heytesbury, and on the second Tuesday it was understood that the production of the prisoners was only formal. The final examination, and committal, if the evidence should be sufficient, was to take place on the third Tuesday in the month. Against this Mr. Jones had remonstrated very loudly on Sam's behalf, protesting that the magistrates were going beyond their power in locking up a man against whom there was no more evidence now than there had been before they had found themselves compelled to release him on bail. But this was of no avail. Sam had been released before because the men who were supposed to have been his accomplices were not in custody; and now that they were in custody the police declared it to be out of the question that he should be left at large. The magistrates of course agreed with the police, in spite of the indignation of Mr. Jones. In the meantime a subpœna was served upon Carry Brattle to appear on that final Tuesday,—Tuesday the nineteenth of June. The policeman, when he served her with the paper, told her that on the

morning in question he would come and fetch her. The poor girl said not a word as she took into her hand the dreadful document. Mrs. Stiggs asked a question or two of the man, but got from him no information. But it was well known in Trotter's Buildings, and round about the Three Honest Men, that Sam Brattle was to be tried for the murder of Mr. Trumbull, and public opinion in that part of Salisbury was adverse to Sam. Public opinion was adverse, also, to poor Carry; and Mrs. Stiggs was becoming almost tired of her lodger, although the payment made for her was not ungenerous and was as punctual as the sun. In truth, the tongue of the landlady of the Three Honest Men was potential in those parts, and was very bitter against Sam and his sister.

In the meantime there was a matter of interest which, to our friends at Bullhampton, exceeded even that of the Heytesbury examinations. Mr. Gilmore was now daily at the Vicarage on some new or old lover's pretence. It might be that he stood but for a minute or two on the terrace outside the drawing-room windows, or that he would sit with the ladies half the afternoon, or that he would come down to dinner,—some excuse having arisen for an invitation to that effect during the morning. Very little was said on the subject between Mrs. Fenwick and Mary Lowther, and not a word between the Vicar and his guest; but between Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick many words were spoken, and before the first week was over they were sure that she would yield.

"I think she will," said Mrs. Fenwick;—"but she will do it in agony."

"Then if I were Harry I would leave her alone," said the Vicar.

"But you are not Harry; and if you were, you would be wrong. She will not be happy when she accepts him; but by the time the day fixed for the wedding comes round, she will have reconciled herself to it, and then she will be as loving a wife as ever a man had." But the Vicar shook his head and said that, so far as he was concerned, love of that sort would not have sufficed for him.

"Of course," said his wife, "it is very pleasant for a man to be told that the woman he loves is dying for him; but men can't always have everything that they want."

Mary Lowther at this time became subject to a feeling of shame which almost overwhelmed her. There grew upon her a consciousness that she had allowed herself to come to Bullhampton on purpose that she might receive a renewed offer of marriage from her old lover, and that she had done so because her new and favoured lover had left her. Of course she must accept Mr. Gilmore. Of that she had now become quite sure. She had come to Bullhampton,—so she now told herself,—because she had been taught to believe that it would not be right for her to abandon herself to a mode of life which was not to her taste. All the friends in whose judgment she could confide expressed to her in every possible way their desire that she should marry this man; and now she had made this journey with the view of following their counsel. So she thought of herself and her doings; but such was not in truth the case. When she first determined to visit Bullhampton, she was very far from thinking that she would accept the man. Mrs. Fenwick's argument that she should not be kept away from Bullhampton by fear of Mr. Gilmore, had prevailed with

her,—and she had come. And now that she was there, and that this man was daily with her, it was no longer possible that she should refuse him. And, after all, what did it matter? She was becoming sick of the importance which she imputed to herself in thinking of herself. If she could make the man happy why should she not do so? The romance of her life had become to her a rhodomontade of which she was ashamed. What was her love, that she should think so much about it? What did it mean? Could she not do her duty in the position in life in which her friends wished to place her, without hankering after a something which was not to be bestowed on her? After all, what did it all matter? She would tell the man the exact truth as well as she knew how to tell it, and then let him take her or leave her as he listed.

And she did tell him the truth, after the following fashion. It came to pass at last that a day and an hour was fixed in which Mr. Gilmore might come to the Vicarage and find Mary alone. There were no absolute words arranging this to which she was a party, but it was understood. She did not even pretend an unwillingness to receive him, and had assented by silence when Mrs. Fenwick had said that the man should be put out of his suspense. Mary, when she was silent, knew well that it was no longer within her power to refuse him.

He came and found her alone. He knew, too, or fancied that he knew, what would be the result of the interview. She would accept him, without protestations of violent love for himself, acknowledging what had passed between her and her cousin, and proffering to him the offer of future affection. He had pictured it all to himself, and knew that he intended to accept

what would be tendered. There were drawbacks in the happiness which was in store for him, but still he would take what he could get. As each so nearly understood the purpose of the other it was almost a pity that the arrangement could not be made without any words between them,—words which could hardly be pleasant either in the speaking or in the hearing.

He had determined that he would disembarrass himself of all preliminary flourishes in addressing her, and had his speech ready as he took her by the hand. "Mary," he said, "you know why I am here." Of course she made no reply. "I told you when I first saw you again that I was unchanged." Then he paused, as though he expected that she would answer him, but still she said nothing. "Indeed I am unchanged. When you were here before I told you that I could look forward to no happiness unless you would consent to be my wife. That was nearly a year ago, and I have come again now to tell you the same thing. I do not think but what you will believe me to be in earnest."

"I know that you are in earnest," she said.

"No man was ever more so. My constancy has been tried during the time that you have been away. I do not say so as a reproach to you. Of course there can be no reproach. I have nothing to complain of in your conduct to me. But I think I may say that if my regard for you has outlived the pain of those months there is some evidence that it is sincere."

"I have never doubted your sincerity."

"Nor can you doubt my constancy."

"Except in this, that it is so often that we want that which we have not, and find it so little worthy of having when we get it."

"You do not say that from your heart, Mary. If you mean to refuse me again, it is not because you doubt the reality of my love."

"I do not mean to refuse you again, Mr. Gilmore." Then he attempted to put his arm around her waist, but she recoiled from him, not in anger, but very quietly, and with a womanly grace that was perfect. "But you must hear me first, before I can allow you to take me in the only way in which I can bestow myself. I have been steeling myself to this, and I must tell you all that has occurred since we were last together."

"I know it all," said he, anxious that she should be spared;—anxious also that he himself should be spared the pain of hearing that which she was about to say to him.

But it was necessary for her that she should say it. She would not go to him as his accepted mistress upon other terms than those she had already proposed to herself. "Though you know it, I must speak of it," she said. "I should not, otherwise, be dealing honestly either with you or with myself. Since I saw you last, I have met my cousin, Captain Marrable. I became attached to him with a quickness which I cannot even myself understand. I loved him dearly, and we were engaged to be married."

"You wrote to me, Mary, and told me all that." This he said, striving to hide the impatience which he felt; but striving in vain.

"I did so, and now I have to tell you that that engagement is at an end. Circumstances occurred,—a sad loss of income that he had expected,—which made it imperative on him, and also on me in his behalf, that we should abandon our hopes. He would

have been ruined by such a marriage,—and it is all over." Then she paused, and he thought that she had done; but there was more to be said, words heavier to be borne than any which she had yet uttered. "And I love him still. I should lie if I said that it was not so. If he were free to marry me this moment I should go to him." As she said this, there came a black cloud across his brow; but he stood silent to hear it all to the last. "My respect and esteem for you are boundless," she continued,—"but he has my heart. It is only because I know that I cannot be his wife that I have allowed myself to think whether it is my duty to become the wife of another man. After what I now say to you, I do not expect that you will persevere. Should you do so, you must give me time." Then she paused, as though it were now his turn to speak; but there was something further that she felt herself bound to say, and, as he was still silent, she continued. "My friends,—those whom I most trust in the world, my aunt and Janet Fenwick, all tell me that it will be best for me to accept your offer. I have made no promise to either of them. I would tell my mind to no one till I told it to you. I believe I owe as much to you,—almost as a woman can owe to a man; but still, were my cousin so placed that he could afford to marry a poor wife, I should leave you and go to him at once. I have told you everything now; and if, after this, you can think me worth having, I can only promise that I will endeavour, at some future time, to do my duty to you as your wife." Then she had finished, and she stood before him—waiting her doom.

His brow had become black and still blacker as she continued her speech. He had kept his eyes upon her

without quailing for a moment, and had hoped for some moment of tenderness, some sparkle of feeling, at seeing which he might have taken her in his arms and have stopped the sternness of her speech. But she had been at least as strong as he was, and had not allowed herself to show the slightest sign of weakness.

"You do not love me, then?" he said.

"I esteem you as we esteem our dearest friends."

"And you will never love me?"

"How shall I answer you? I do love you,—but not as I love him. I shall never again have that feeling."

"Except for him?"

"Except for him. If it is to be conquered, I will conquer it. I know, Mr. Gilmore, that what I have told you will drive you from me. It ought to do so."

"It is for me to judge of that," he said, turning upon her quickly.

"In judging for myself I have thought it right to tell you the exact truth, and to let you know what it is that you would possess if you should choose to take me." Then again she was silent, and waited for her doom.

There was a pause of, perhaps, a couple of minutes, during which he made no reply. He walked the length of the room twice, slowly, before he uttered a word, and during that time he did not look at her. Had he chosen to take an hour, she would not have interrupted him again. She had told him everything, and it was for him now to decide. After what she had said he could not but recall his offer. How was it possible that he should desire to make a woman his wife after such a declaration as that which she had made to him?

"And now," he said, "it is for me to decide."

"Yes, Mr. Gilmore, it is for you to decide."

"Then," said he, coming up to her and putting out his hand, "you are my betrothed. May God in His mercy soften your heart to me, and enable you to give me some return for all the love that I bear you." She took his hand and raised it to her lips and kissed it, and then had left the room before he was able to stop her.

CHAPTER XIII

MARY LOWTHER INSPECTS HER FUTURE HOME

Of course it was soon known in the Vicarage that Mary Lowther had accepted the Squire's hand. She had left him standing in the drawing-room;—had left him very abruptly, though she had condescended to kiss his hand. Perhaps in no way could she have made a kinder reply to his petition for mercy. In ordinary cases it is probably common for a lady, when she has yielded to a gentleman's entreaties for the gift of herself, to yield also something further for his immediate gratification, and to submit herself to his embrace. In this instance it was impossible that the lady should do so. After the very definite manner in which she had explained to him her feelings, it was out of the question that she should stay and toy with him;—that she should bear the pressure of his arm, or return his caresses. But there had come upon her a sharp desire to show her gratitude before she left him,—to show her gratitude, and to prove, by some personal action towards him, that though she had been forced to tell him that she did not love him,—that she did not love him after the fashion in which his love was given to her,—that yet he was dear to her, as our dearest friends are dear. And, therefore, when he had stretched out his hand to her in sign of the offer which he was making her, she had raised it to her lips and kissed it.

Very shortly after she had left the room Mrs. Fen-

wick came to him. "Well, Harry," she said, coming up close to him, and looking into his eyes to see how it had fared with him, "tell me that I may wish you joy."

"She has promised that she will be my wife," he said.

"And is not that what you have so long wished?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Then why are you not elated?"

"I have no doubt she will tell you all. But do not suppose, Mrs. Fenwick, that I am not thankful. She has behaved very well,—and she has accepted me. She has explained to me in what way her acceptance has been given, and I have submitted to it."

"Now, Harry, you are going to make yourself wretched about some romantic trifle."

"I am not going to make myself miserable at all. I am much less miserable than I could have believed to be possible six months ago. She has told me that she will be my wife, and I do not for a moment think that she will go back from her word."

"Then what is it?"

"I have not won her as other men do. Never mind;—I do not mean to complain. Mrs. Fenwick, I shall trust you to let me know when she will be glad to see me here."

"Of course you will come when you like and how you like. You must be quite at home here."

"As far as you and Frank are concerned, that would be a matter-of-course to me. But it cannot be so—yet—in regard to Mary. At any rate, I will not intrude upon her till I know that my coming will not be a trouble to her." After this it was not necessary that Mrs. Fenwick should be told much more of

the manner in which these new betrothals had been made.

Mary was, of course, congratulated both by the Vicar and his wife, and she received their congratulations with a dignity of deportment which, even from her, almost surprised them. She said scarcely a word, but smiled as she was kissed by each of them and did whisper something as to her hope that she might be able to make Mr. Gilmore happy. There was certainly no triumph; and there was no visible sign of regret. When she was asked whether she would not wish that he should come to the Vicarage, she declared that she would have him come just as he pleased. If she only knew of his coming beforehand she would take care that she would be within to receive him. Whatever might be his wishes, she would obey them. Mrs. Fenwick suggested that Gilmore would like her to go up to the Privets, and look at the house which was to be her future home. She promised that she would go with him at any hour that he might appoint. Then there was something said as to fixing the day of the wedding. "It is not to be immediately," she replied; "he promised me that he would give me time." "She speaks of it as though she was going to be hung," the Vicar said afterwards to his wife.

On the day after her engagement she saw Gilmore, and then she wrote to her aunt to tell her the tidings. Her letter was very short, and had not Miss Marrable thoroughly understood the character of her niece, and the agony of the struggle to which Mary was now subjected, it would have seemed to be cold and ungrateful. "My dear Aunt," said the letter, "Yesterday I accepted Mr. Gilmore's offer. I know you will be glad to hear this, as you have always thought that I ought

to do so. No time has been fixed for the wedding, but it will not be very soon. I hope I may do my duty to him and make him happy; but I do not know whether I should not have been more useful in remaining with my affectionate aunt." That was the whole letter, and there was no other friend to whom she herself communicated the tidings. It occurred to her for a moment that she would write to Walter Marrable;—but Walter Marrable had told her nothing of Edith Brownlow. Walter Marrable would learn the news fast enough. And then, the writing of such a letter would not have been very easy to her.

On Sunday afternoon, after church, she walked up to the Privets with her lover. The engagement had been made on the previous Thursday, and this was the first occasion on which she had been alone with him for more than a minute or two at a time since she had then parted from him. They started immediately from the churchyard, passing out through the gate which led into Mr. Trumbull's field, and it was understood that they were to return for an early dinner at the Vicarage. Mary had made many resolutions as to this walk. She would talk much, so that it might not be tedious and melancholy to him; she would praise everything, and show the interest which she took in the house and grounds; she would ask questions, and display no hesitation as to claiming her own future share of possession in all that belonged to him. She went off at once as soon as she was through the wicket gate, asking questions as to the division of the property of the parish between the two owners, as to this field and that field, and the little wood which they passed, till her sharp intelligence told her that she was over-acting her part. He was no actor, but unconsciously he per-

ceived her effort; and he resented it, unconsciously also, by short answers and an uninterested tone. She was aware of it all, and felt that there had been a mistake. It would be better for her to leave the play in his hands, and to adapt herself to his moods.

"We had better go straight up to the house," he said, as soon as the pathway had led them off Lord Trowbridge's land into his own domain.

"I think we had," said she.

"If we go round by the stables it will make us late for Fenwick's dinner."

"We ought to be back by half-past two," she said. They had left the church exactly at half-past twelve, and were therefore to be together for two hours.

He took her over the house. The showing of a house in such circumstances is very trying, both to the man and to the woman. He is weighted by a mixed load of pride in his possession and of assumed humility. She, to whom every detail of the future nest is so vitally important, is almost bound to praise, though every encomium she pronounces will be a difficulty in the way of those changes which she contemplates. But on the present occasion Mary contemplated no change. Marrying this man, as she was about to do, professedly without loving him, she was bound to take everything else as she found it. The dwelling-rooms of the house she had known before; the dining-room, the drawing-room, and the library. She was now taken into his private chamber, where he sat as a magistrate, and paid his men, and kept his guns and fishing-rods. Here she sat down for a moment, and when he had told her this and that,—how he was always here for so long in the morning, and how he hoped that she would come to him sometimes when

he was thus busy, he came and stood over her, putting his hand upon her shoulder. "Mary," he said, "will you not kiss me?"

"Certainly I will," she said, jumping up, and offering her face to his salute. A month or two ago he would have given the world for permission to kiss her; and now it seemed as though the thing itself were a matter but of little joy. A kiss to be joyful should be stolen, with a conviction on the part of the offender that she who has suffered the loss will never prosecute the thief. She had meant to be good to him, but the favour would have gone further with him had she made more of it.

Then they went up stairs. Who does not know the questions that were asked and that were answered? On this occasion they were asked and answered with matter-of-fact useful earnestness. The papers on the walls were perhaps old and ugly; but she did not mind it if they were so. If he liked to have the rooms new papered, of course it would be nice. Would she like new furniture? Did she object to the old-fashioned four-post bedsteads? Had she any special taste about hangings and colourings? Of course she had, but she could not bring herself to indulge them by giving orders as to this or that. She praised everything; was satisfied with everything; was interested in everything; but would propose no changes. What right had she, seeing that she was to give him so little, to ask him to do this or that for her. She meant on this occasion to do all that she could for his happiness, but had she ordered new furniture for the whole house, begged that every room might be fresh papered, and pointed out that the panelling was old and must be altered, and the entire edifice repainted inside and

out, he would have been a happier man. "I hope you will find it comfortable," he said, in a tone of voice that was beyond measure lugubrious.

"I am sure that I shall," she replied. "What more can any woman want than there is here? And then there are so many comforts to which I have never been used."

This passed between them as they stood on the steps of the house, looking down upon green paddocks in front of the house; "I think we will come and see the gardens another day," he said.

"Whenever you like," she answered. "Perhaps if we stay now we shall be keeping them waiting." Then as they returned by the road, she remembered an account that Janet Fenwick had given her of a certain visit which Janet had made to the Vicarage as Miss Balfour, and of all the joys of that inspection. But what right had she, Mary Lowther, to suppose that she could have any of the same pleasure? Janet Balfour, in her first visit to the Vicarage, had been to see the home in which she was to live with the man to whom her whole heart had been given without reserve.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GRINDER AND HIS COMRADE

As the day drew near for the final examination at Heytesbury of the suspected murderers,—the day on which it was expected that either all the three prisoners, or at least two of them, would be committed to take their trial at the summer assizes, the Vicar became anxious as to the appearance of Carry Brattle in the Court. At first he entertained an idea that he would go over to Salisbury and fetch her; but his wife declared that this was imprudent and Quixotic,—and that he shouldn't do it. Fenwick's argument in support of his own idea amounted to little more than this,—that he would go for the girl because the Marquis of Trowbridge would be sure to condemn him for taking such a step. "It is intolerable to me," he said, "that I should be impeded in my free action by the interference and accusations of such an ass as that." But the question was one on which his wife felt herself to be so strong that she would not yield, either to his logic or to his anger. "It can't be fit for you to go about and fetch witnesses; and it won't make it more fit because she is a pretty young woman who has lost her character." "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," said the Vicar. But his wife was resolute, and he gave up the plan. He wrote, however, to the constable at Salisbury, begging the man to look to the young woman's comfort, and offering to pay for any special

privilege or accommodation that might be accorded to her. This occurred on the Saturday before the day on which Mary Lowther was taken up to look at her new home.

The Sunday passed by, with more or less of conversation respecting the murder; and also the Monday morning. The Vicar had himself been summoned to give his evidence as to having found Sam Brattle in his own garden, in company with another man with whom he had wrestled, and whom he was able to substantiate as the Grinder; and, indeed, the terrible bruise made by the Vicar's life-preserver on the Grinder's back, would be proved by evidence from Lavington. On the Monday evening he was sitting, after dinner, with Gilmore, who had dined at the Vicarage, when he was told that a constable from Salisbury wished to see him. The constable was called into the room, and soon told his story. He had gone up to Trotter's Buildings that day after dinner, and was told that the bird had flown. She had gone out that morning, and Mrs. Stiggs knew nothing of her departure. When they examined the room in which she slept, they found that she had taken what little money she possessed and her best clothes. She had changed her frock, and put on a pair of strong boots, and taken her cloak with her. Mrs. Stiggs acknowledged that had she seen the girl going forth thus provided, her suspicions would have been aroused; but Carry had managed to leave the house without being observed. Then the constable went on to say that Mrs. Stiggs had told him that she had been sure that Carry would go. "I've been waiting for it all along," she had said; "but when there came the law rumpus atop of the other, I knew as how she'd hop the twig."

And now Carry Brattle had hopped the twig, and no one knew whither she had gone. There was much sorrow at the Vicarage; for Mrs. Fenwick, though she had been obliged to restrain her husband's impetuosity in the matter, had nevertheless wished well for the poor girl;—and who could not believe aught of her now but that she would return to misery and degradation? When the constable was interrogated as to the need for her attendance on the morrow, he declared that nothing could now be done towards finding her and bringing her to Heytesbury in time for the magistrates' session. He supposed there would be another remand, and that then she, too, would be—wanted.

But there had been so many remands that on the Tuesday the magistrates were determined to commit the men, and did commit two of them. Against Sam there was no tittle of evidence, except as to that fact that he had been seen with these men in Mr. Fenwick's garden; and it was at once proposed to put him into the witness-box, instead of proceeding against him as one of the murderers. As a witness he was adjudged to have behaved badly; but the assumed independence of his demeanour was probably the worst of his misbehaviour. He would tell them nothing of the circumstances of the murder, except that having previously become acquainted with the two men, Burrows and Acorn, and having, as he thought, a spite against the Vicar at the time, he had determined to make free with some of the Vicarage fruit. He had, he said, met the men in the village that afternoon, and had no knowledge of their business there. He had known Acorn more intimately than the other man, and confessed at last that his acquaintance with that man had arisen from a belief that Acorn was about to marry his

sister. He acknowledged that he knew that Burrows had been a convicted thief, and that Acorn had been punished for horse stealing. When he was asked how it had come to pass that he was desirous of seeing his sister married to a horse-stealer, he declined to answer, and, looking round the Court, said that he hoped there was no man there who would be coward enough to say anything against his sister. They who heard him declared that there was more of a threat than a request expressed in his words and manner.

A question was put to him as to his knowledge of Farmer Trumbull's money. "There was them as knew; but I knew nothing," he said. He was pressed on this point by the magistrates, but would say not a word further. As to this, however, the police were indifferent, as they believed that they would be able to prove at the trial, from other sources, that the mother of the man called the Grinder had certainly received tidings of the farmer's wealth. There were many small matters of evidence to which the magistrates trusted. One of the men had bought poison, and the dog had been poisoned. The presence of the cart at the farmer's gate was proved, and the subsequent presence of the two men in the same cart at Pycroft Common. The size of the footprints, the characters and subsequent flight of the men, and certain damaging denials and admissions which they themselves had made, all went to make up the case against them, and they were committed to be tried for the murder. Sam, however, was allowed to go free, being served, however, with a subpœna to attend at the trial as a witness. "I will," said he, "if you send me down money enough to bring me up from South Shields, and take me back again. I ain't a coming on my own hook, as I did this time;—

and wouldn't now, only for Muster Fenwick." Our friends left the police to settle this question with Sam, and then drove home to Bullhampton.

The Vicar was triumphant, though his triumph was somewhat quelled by the disappearance of Carry Brattle. There could, however, be no longer any doubt that Sam Brattle's innocence as to the murder was established. Head-Constable Toffy had himself acknowledged to him that Sam could have had no hand in it. "I told you so from the beginning," said the Vicar. "We 'as got the right 'uns, at any rate," said the constable; "and it wasn't none of our fault that we hadn't 'em before." But though Constable Toffy was thus honest, there were one or two in Heytesbury on that day who still persisted in declaring that Sam was one of the murderers. Sir Thomas Charleys stuck to that opinion to the last; and Lord Trowbridge, who had again sat upon the bench, was quite convinced that justice was being shamefully robbed of her due.

When the Vicar reached Bullhampton, instead of turning into his own place at once, he drove himself on to the mill. He dropped Gilmore at the gate, but he could not bear that the father and mother should not know immediately, from a source which they would trust, that Sam had been declared innocent of that great offence. Driving around by the road, Fenwick met the miller about a quarter of a mile from his own house. "Mr. Brattle," he said, "they have committed the two men."

"Have they, sir?" said the miller, not condescending to ask a question about his own son.

"As I have said all along, Sam had no more to do with it than you or I."

"You have been very good, Muster Fenwick."

"Come, Mr. Brattle, do not pretend that this is not a comfort to you."

"A comfort as my son ain't proved a murderer! If they'd a hanged 'im, Muster Fenwick, that 'd a been bad, for certain. It ain't much of comfort we has; but there may be a better and a worser in everything, no doubt. I'm obleeged to you, all as one, Muster Fenwick—very much obleeged; and it will take a heavy load off his mother's heart." Then the Vicar turned his gig round, and drove himself home.

CHAPTER XV

CARRY BRATTLE'S JOURNEY

Mrs. Stiggs had been right in her surmise about Carry Brattle. The confinement in Trotter's Buildings and want of interest in her life was more than the girl could bear, and she had been thinking of escape almost from the first day that she had been there. Had it not been for the mingled fear and love with which she regarded Mr. Fenwick, had she not dreaded that he should think her ungrateful, she would have flown even before the summons came to her which told her that she must appear before the magistrates and lawyers, and among a crowd of people, in the neighbourhood of her old home. That she could not endure, and therefore she had flown. When it had been suggested to her that she should go and live with her brother's wife as her servant, that idea had been hard to bear. But there had been uncertainty, and an opinion of her own which proved to be right, that her sister-in-law would not receive her. Now about this paper that the policeman had handed to her, and the threatened journey to Heytesbury, there was no uncertainty,—unless she might possibly escape the evil by running away. Therefore she ran away.

The straight-going people of the world, in dealing with those who go crooked, are almost always unreasonable. "Because you have been bad," say they who are not bad to those who are bad, "because you have hitherto indulged yourself with all pleasures within

your reach, because you have never worked steadily, or submitted yourself to restraint, because you have been a drunkard, and a gambler, and have lived in foul company, therefore now,—now that I have got a hold of you and can manipulate you in reference to your repentance and future conduct,—I will require from you a mode of life that, in its general attractions, shall be about equal to that of a hermit in the desert. If you flinch you are not only a monster of ingratitude towards me, who am taking all this trouble to save you, but you are also a poor wretch for whom no possible hope of grace can remain." When it is found that a young man is neglecting his duties, doing nothing, spending his nights in billiard-rooms and worse places, and getting up at two o'clock in the day, the usual prescription of his friends is that he should lock himself up in his own dingy room, drink tea, and spend his hours in reading good books. It is hardly recognised that a sudden change from billiards to good books requires a strength of character which, if possessed, would probably have kept the young man altogether from falling into bad habits. If we left the doors of our prisons open, and then expressed disgust because the prisoners walked out, we should hardly be less rational. The hours at Mrs. Stiggs's house had been frightfully heavy to poor Carry Brattle, and at last she escaped.

It was half-past ten on the Monday morning when she went out. It was her custom to go out at that hour. Mr. Fenwick had desired her to attend the morning services at the Cathedral. She had done so for a day or two, and then had neglected them. But she had still left the house always at that time; and once, when Mrs. Stiggs had asked some questions on

the subject, she had replied almost in anger that she was not a prisoner. On this occasion she made changes in her dress which were not usual, and therefore she was careful to avoid being seen as she went; but had she been interrogated she would have persevered. Who had a right to stop her?

But where should she go? The reader may perhaps remember that once when Mr. Fenwick first found this poor girl, after her flight from home and her great disgrace, she had expressed a desire to go to the mill and just look at it,—even if she might do no more than that. The same idea was now in her mind, but as she left the city she had no concerted plan. There were two things between which she must choose at once,—either to go to London, or not to go to London. She had money enough for her fare, and perhaps a few shillings over. In a dim way she did understand that the choice was between going to the devil at once,—and not going quite at once; and then, weakly, wistfully, with uncertain step, almost without an operation of her mind, she did not take the turn which, from the end of Trotter's Buildings, would have brought her to the Railway Station, but did take that which led her by the Three Honest Men out on to the Devizes road,—the road which passes across Salisbury Plain, and leads from the city to many Wiltshire villages,—of which Bullhampton is one.

She walked slowly, but she walked nearly the whole day. Nothing could be more truly tragical than the utterly purposeless tenour of her day,—and of her whole life. She had no plan,—nothing before her; no object even for the evening and night of that very day in which she was wasting her strength on the Devizes road. It is the lack of object, of all aim, in the lives

of the houseless wanderers that gives to them the most terrible element of their misery. Think of it! To walk forth with, say, ten shillings in your pocket,—so that there need be no instant suffering from want of bread or shelter,—and have no work to do, no friend to see, no place to expect you, no duty to accomplish, no hope to follow, no bourn to which you can draw nigher,—except that bourn which, in such circumstances, the traveller must surely regard as simply the end of his weariness! But there is nothing to which humanity cannot attune itself. Men can live upon poison, can learn to endure absolute solitude, can bear contumely, scorn, and shame, and never show it. Carry Brattle had already become accustomed to misery, and as she walked she thought more of the wretchedness of the present hour, of her weary feet, of her hunger, and of the nature of the rest which she might purchase for herself at some poor wayside inn, than she did of her future life.

She got a lump of bread and a glass of beer in the middle of the day, and then she walked on and on till the evening came. She went very slowly, stopping often and sitting down when the roadside would afford her some spot of green shade. At eight o'clock she had walked fifteen miles, straight along the road, and, as she knew well, had passed the turn which would have taken her by the nearest way from Salisbury to Bullhampton. She had formed no plan, but entertained a hope that if she continued to walk they would not catch her so as to take her to Heytesbury on the morrow. She knew that if she went on she might get to Pycroft Common by this road; and though there was no one in the whole world whom she hated worse than Mrs. Burrows, still at Pycroft Common she might probably

be taken in and sheltered. At eight she reached a small village which she remembered to have seen before, of which she saw the name written up on a board, and which she knew to be six miles from Bullhampton. She was so tired and weary that she could go no further, and here she asked for a bed. She told them that she was walking from Salisbury to the house of a friend who lived near Devizes, and that she had thought she could do it in one day and save her railway fare. She was simply asked to pay for her bed and supper beforehand, and then she was taken in and fed and sheltered. On the next morning she got up very late and was unwilling to leave the house. She paid for her breakfast, and, as she was not told to go her way, she sat on the chair in which she had been placed, without speaking, almost without moving, till late in the afternoon. At three o'clock she roused herself, asked for some bread and cheese, which she put in her pocket, and started again upon her journey. She thought that she would be safe, at any rate for that day, from the magistrates and the policemen, from the sight of her brother, and from the presence of that other man at Heytesbury. But whither she would go when she left the house,—whether on to the hated cottage at Pycroft Common, or to her father's house, she had not made up her mind when she tied on her hat. She went on along the road towards Devizes, and about two miles from the village she came to a lane turning to the left, with a finger-post. On this was written a direction,—To Bullhampton and Imber; and here she turned short off towards the parish in which she had been born. It was then four o'clock, and when she had travelled a mile further she found a nook under the wall of a little bridge, and there she seated herself, and ate her dinner of

bread and cheese. While she was there a policeman on foot passed along the road. The man did not see her, and had he seen her he would have taken no more than a policeman's ordinary notice of her; but she saw him, and in consequence did not leave her hiding-place for hours.

About nine o'clock she crept on again, but even then her mind was not made up. She did not even yet know where she would bestow herself for that night. It seemed to her that there would be an inexpressible pleasure to her, even in her misery, in walking round the precincts of the mill, in gazing at the windows of the house, in standing on the bridge where she had so often loitered, and in looking once more on the scene of her childhood. But, as she thought of this, she remembered the darkness of the stream, and the softly-gurgling but rapid flow with which it hurried itself on beneath the black abyss of the building. She had often shuddered as she watched it, indulging herself in the luxury of causeless trepidation. But now, were she there, she would surely take that plunge into the blackness, which would bring her to the end of all her misery!

And yet, as she went on towards her old home, through the twilight, she had no more definite idea than that of looking once more on the place which had been cherished in her memory through all her sufferings. As to her rest for the night she had no plan,—unless, indeed, she might find her rest in the hidden mill-pool of that dark, softly-gurgling stream.

On that same day, between six and seven in the evening, the miller was told by Mr. Fenwick that his son was no longer accused of the murder. He had not received the information in the most gracious manner;

but not the less quick was he in making it known at the mill. "Them dunderheads over at He'tsbry has found out at last as our Sam had now't to do with it." This he said, addressing no one in particular, but in the hearing of his wife and Fanny Brattle. Then there came upon him a torrent of questions and a torrent also of tears. Mrs. Brattle and Fanny had both made up their minds that Sam was innocent; but the mother had still feared that he would be made to suffer in spite of his innocence. Fanny, however, had always persisted that the goodness of the Lord would save him and them from such injustice. To the old man himself they had hardly dared to talk about it, but now they strove to win him to some softness. Might not a struggle be made to bring Sam back to the mill? But it was very hard to soften the miller. "After what's come and gone, the lad is better away," he said, at last. "I didn't think as he'd ever raised his hand again an old man," he said, shortly afterwards; "but he's kep' company with them as did. It's a'most as bad." Beyond this the miller would not go; but, when they separated for the night, the mother took herself for a while into the daughter's chamber in order that they might weep and rejoice together. It was now all but midsummer, and the evenings were long and sultry. The window of Fanny's bedroom looked out on to the garden of the mill, and was but a foot or two above the ground. This ground had once been pleasant to them all, and profitable withal. Of late, since the miller had become old, and Sam had grown to be too restive and self-willed to act as desired for the general welfare of the family, but little of pleasure, or profit either, had been forthcoming from the patch of ground. There were a few cabbages there, and rows of untended

gooseberry and currant bushes, and down towards the orchard there was a patch of potatoes; but no one took pride now in the garden. As for Fanny, if she could provide that there should always be a sufficient meal on the table for her father and mother, it was as much as she could do. The days were clean gone by in which she had had time and spirits to tend her roses, and pinks, and pansies. Now she sat at the open window with her mother, and with bated breath they spoke of the daughter and sister that was lost to them.

"He wouldn't take it amiss, mother, if I was to go over to Salisbury?"

"If you was to ask him, Fan, he'd bid you not," said the mother.

"But I wouldn't ask him. I wouldn't tell him till I was back. She was to be before the magistrates to-day. Mr. Fenwick told me so on Sunday."

"It will be about the death of her."

"I don't know, mother. She's bolder, now, mother, I fear, than what she was in the old days. And she was always sprightly,—speaking up to the quality, with no fear like. Maybe it was what she said that got them to let Sam go. She was never a coward, such as me."

"Oh, Fan, if she'd only taken after thee!"

"The Lord, mother, makes us different for purposes of his own. Of all the lasses I ever see, to my eye she was the comeliest." The old woman couldn't speak now, but rubbed her moist cheeks with her raised apron. "I'll ask Mr. Toffy, to-morrow, mother," continued Fanny, "and if she be still at that place in Salisbury where Mr. Fenwick put her, I'll just go to her. Father won't turn me out of the house along of it."

"Turn thee out, Fan! He'll never turn thee out.

What 'd a do, or what 'd I do, if thee was to go away from us? If thou dost go, Fan, take her a few bits of things that are lying there in the big press, and 'll never be used other gait. I warrant the poor child 'll be but badly off for under-clothing."

And then they planned how the journey on the morrow should be made,—after the constable should have been questioned, and the Vicar should have been consulted. Fanny would leave home immediately after breakfast, and when the miller should ask after her at dinner his wife should tell him that his daughter had gone to Salisbury. If further question should be asked,—and it was thought possible that no further question would be asked, as the father would then guess the errand on which his daughter would have gone,—but if the subject were further mooted, Mrs. Brattle, with such courage as she might be able to assume, should acknowledge the business that had taken Fanny to Salisbury. Then there arose questions about money. Mr. Fenwick had owned, thinking that he might thereby ease the mother's heart, that for the present Carry was maintained by him. To take this task upon themselves the mother and daughter were unable. The money which they had in hand, very small in amount, was, they knew, the property of the head of the family. That they could do no permanent good to Carry was a great grief. But it might be something if they could comfort her for awhile.

"I don't think but what her heart 'll still be soft to thee, Fan; and who knows but what it may bring her round to see thy face, and hear thy voice."

At that moment Fanny heard a sound in the garden, and stretched her head and shoulders quickly out of the window. They had been late at the mill that evening,

and it was now eleven o'clock. It had been still daylight when the miller had left them at tea; but the night had crept on them as they sat there. There was no moon, but there was still something left of the reflection of the last colours of the setting sun, and the night was by no means dark. Fanny saw at once the figure of a woman, though she did not at once recognise the person of her sister. "Oh, mother! oh, mother! oh, mother!" said a voice from the night; and in a moment Carry Brattle had stretched herself so far within the window that she had grasped her mother by the arm.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FATTED CALF

Mrs. Brattle, when she heard her daughter's voice, was so confounded, dismayed, and frightened, that for awhile she could give no direction as to what should be done. She had screamed at first, having some dim idea in her mind that the form she saw was not of living flesh and blood. And Carry herself had been hardly more composed and mistress of herself than her mother. She had strayed thither, never having quite made up her mind to any settled purpose. From the spot in which she had hidden herself under the bridge when the policeman passed her she had started when the evening sun was setting, and had wandered on slowly till the old familiar landmarks of the parish were reached. And then she came to the river, and looking across could just see the eaves of the mill through the willows by the last gloaming of the sunlight. Then she stood and paused, and every now and again had crept on a few feet as her courage came to her, and at last, by the well-known little path, she had crept down behind the mill, crossing the stream by the board which had once been so accustomed to her feet, and had made her way into the garden and had heard her mother and sister as they talked together at the open window. Any idea which she had hitherto entertained of not making herself known to them at the mill,—of not making herself known at any rate to her mother and sister,—left her at once at that moment. There had been upon

her a waking dream, a horrid dream, that the waters of the mill-stream might flow over her head, and hide her wickedness and her misery from the eyes of men; and she had stood and shuddered as she saw the river; but she had never really thought that her own strength would suffice for that termination to her sorrows. It was more probable that she would be doomed to lie during the night beneath a hedge, and then perish of the morning cold! But now, as she heard the voices at the window, there could be no choice for her but that she should make herself known,—not though her father should kill her.

Even Fanny was driven beyond the strength of her composure by the strangeness of this event. "Carry! Carry!" she exclaimed, over and over again, not aloud,—and indeed her voice was never loud,—but with bated wonder. The two sisters held each other by the hand, and Carry's other hand still grasped her mother's arm. "Oh, mother, I am so tired," said the girl. "Oh, mother, I think that I shall die."

"My child;—my poor child. What shall we do, Fan?"

"Bring her in, of course," said Fanny.

"But your father——"

"We couldn't turn her away from the very window, and she like that, mother."

"Don't turn me away, Fanny. Dear Fanny, do not turn me away," said Carry, striving to take her sister by the other hand.

"No, Carry, we will not," said Fanny, trying to settle her mind on some plan of action. Any idea of keeping the thing long secret from her father she knew that she could not entertain; but for this night she resolved at last that shelter should be given to the

discarded daughter without the father's knowledge. But even in doing this there would be difficulty. Carry must be brought in through the window, as any disturbance at the front of the house would arouse the miller. And then Mrs. Brattle must be made to go to her own room, or her absence would create suspicion and confusion. Fanny, too, had terrible doubts as to her mother's powers of going to bed and lying there without revealing to her husband that some cause of great excitement had arisen. And then it might be that the miller would come to his daughter's room, and insist that the outcast should be made an outcast again, even in the middle of the night. He was a man so stern, so obstinate, so unforgiving, so masterful, that Fanny, though she would face any danger as regarded herself, knew that terrible things might happen. It seemed to her that Carry was very weak. If their father came to them in his wrath, might she not die in her despair? Nevertheless, it was necesasry that something should be done. "We must let her get in at the window, mother," she said. "It won't do, nohow, to unbar the door."

"But what if he was to kill her outright! Oh, Carry; oh, my child! I dunna know as she can get in along of her weakness." But Carry was not so tired as that. She had been in and out of that window scores of times; and now, when she heard that the permission was accorded to her, she was not long before she was in her mother's arms. "My own Carry, my own bairn;—my girl, my darling." And the poor mother satisfied the longings of her heart with infinite caresses.

Fanny in the meantime had crept out to the kitchen, and now returned with food in a plate and cold tea.

"My girl," she said, "you must eat a bit, and then we will have you to bed. When the morn comes, we must think about it."

"Fanny, you was always the best that there ever was," said Carry, speaking from her mother's bosom.

"And now, mother," continued Fanny, "you must creep off. Indeed you must, or of course father'll wake up. And, mother, don't say a word to-morrow when he rises. I'll go to him in the mill myself. That'll be best." Then, with longings that could hardly be repressed, with warm, thick, clinging kisses, with a hot, rapid, repeated assurance that everything,—everything had been forgiven, that her own Carry was once more her own, own Carry, the poor mother allowed herself to be banished. There seemed to her to be such a world of cruelty in the fact that Fanny might remain for the whole of that night with the dear one who had returned to them, while she must be sent away,—perhaps not to see her again if the storm in the morning should rise too loudly! Fanny, with great craft, accompanied her mother to her room, so that if the old man should speak she might be there to answer;—but the miller slept soundly after his day of labour, and never stirred.

"What will he do to me, Fan?" the wanderer asked as soon as her sister returned.

"Don't think of it now, my pet," said Fanny, softened almost as her mother was softened by the sight of her sister.

"Will he kill me, Fan?"

"No, dear; he will not lay a hand upon you. It is his words that are so rough! Carry, Carry, will you be good?"

"I will, dear; indeed I will. I have not been bad since Mr. Fenwick came."

"My sister,—if you will be good, I will never leave you. My heart's darling, my beauty, my pretty one! Carry, you shall be the same to me as always, if you'll be good. I'll never cast it up again you, if you'll be good." Then she, too, filled herself full, and satisfied the hungry craving of her love with the warmth of her caresses. "But thee'll be famished, lass. I'll see thee eat a bit, and then I'll put thee comfortable to bed."

Poor Carry Brattle was famished, and ate the bread and bacon which were set before her, and drank the cold tea, with an appetite which was perhaps unbecoming the romance of her position. Her sister stood over her, cutting a slice now and then from the loaf, telling her that she had taken nothing, smoothing her hair, and wishing for her sake that the fare were better. "I'm afraid of father, Fan,—awfully; but for all that, it's the sweetest meal as I've had since I left the mill." Then Fanny was on her knees beside the returned profligate, covering even the dear one's garments with her kisses.

It was late before Fanny laid herself down by her sister's side that night. "Carry," she whispered when her sister was undressed, "will you kneel here and say your prayers as you used to?" Carry, without a word, did as she was bidden, and hid her face upon her hands in her sister's lap. No word was spoken out loud, but Fanny was satisfied that her sister had been in earnest. "Now sleep, my darling;—and when I've just tidied your things for the morning, I will be with you." The wanderer again obeyed, and in a few moments the work of the past few days befriended her, and she was asleep. Then the sister went to her task with the soiled frock and the soiled shoes, and looked up things clean and decent for the morrow. It would be at any rate well

that Carry should appear before her father without the stain of the road upon her.

As the lost one lay asleep there, with her soft ringlets all loose upon the pillow, still beautiful, still soft, lovely though an outcast from the dearest rights of womanhood, with so much of innocence on her brow, with so much left of the grace of childhood though the glory of the flower had been destroyed by the unworthy hand that had ravished its sweetness, Fanny, sitting in the corner of the room over her work, with her eye from moment to moment turned upon the sleeper, could not keep her mind from wandering away in thoughts on the strange destiny of woman. She knew that there had been moments in her life in which her great love for her sister had been tinged with envy. No young lad had ever waited in the dusk to hear the sound of her footfall; no half-impudent but half-bashful glances had ever been thrown after her as she went through the village on her business. To be a homely, household thing, useful indeed in this world, and with high hopes for the future,—but still to be a drudge; that had been her destiny. There was never a woman to whom the idea of being loved was not the sweetest thought that her mind could produce. Fate had made her plain, and no man had loved her. The same chance had made Carry pretty,—the belle of the village, the acknowledged beauty of Bullhampton. And there she lay, a thing said to be so foul that even a father could not endure to have her name mentioned in his ears! And yet, how small had been her fault compared with other crimes for which men and women are forgiven speedily, even if it has been held that pardon has ever been required.

She came over, and knelt down and kissed her sister

on her brow; and as she did so she swore to herself that by her, even in the inmost recesses of her bosom, Carry should never be held to be evil, to be a castaway, to be one of whom, as her sister, it would behoove her to be ashamed. She had told Carry that she would "never cast it up against her." She now resolved that there should be no such casting up, even in her own judgment. Had she, too, been fair, might not she also have fallen?

At five o'clock on the following morning the miller went out from the house to the mill, according to his daily practice. Fanny heard his heavy step, heard the bar withdrawn, heard the shutters removed from the kitchen window, and knew that her father was as yet in ignorance of the inmate who had been harboured. Fanny at once arose from her bed, careful not to disturb her companion. She had thought it all out, whether she would have Carry ready dressed for an escape, should it be that her father would demand imperiously that she should be sent adrift from the mill, or whether it might not be better that she should be able to plead at the first moment that her sister was in bed, tired, asleep,—at any rate undressed,—and that some little time must be allowed. Might it not be that even in that hour her father's heart might be softened? But she must lose no time in going to him. The hired man who now tended the mill with her father came always at six, and that which she had to say to him must be said with no ear to hear but his own. It would have been impossible even for her to remind him of his daughter before a stranger. She slipped her clothes on, therefore, and within ten minutes of her father's departure followed him into the mill.

The old man had gone aloft, and she heard his slow,

heavy feet as he was moving the sacks which were above her head. She considered for a moment, and thinking it better that she should not herself ascend the little ladder,—knowing that it might be well that she should have the power of instant retreat to the house,—she called to him from below. "What's wanted now?" demanded the old man, as soon as he heard her. "Father, I must speak to you," she said. "Father, you must come down to me." Then he came down slowly, without a word, and stood before her, waiting to hear her tidings. "Father," she said, "there is someone in the house, and I have come to tell you."

"Sam has come, then?" said he; and she could see that there was a sparkle of joy in his eye as he spoke. Oh, if she could only make the return of that other child as grateful to him as would have been the return of his son!

"No, father; it isn't Sam."

"Who be it, then?" The tone of his voice, and the colour and bearing of his face were changed as he asked the question. She saw at once that he had guessed the truth. "It isn't—it isn't——?"

"Yes, father; it is Carry." As she spoke she came close to him, and strove to take his hand; but he thrust both his hands into his pockets and turned himself half way from her. "Father, she is our flesh and blood; you will not turn against her now that she has come back to us, and is sorry for her faults."

"She is a——" But his other daughter had stopped his mouth with her hand before the word had been uttered.

"Father, who among us has not done wrong at times?"

"She has disgraced my grey hairs, and made me a

reproach and a shame. I will not see her. Bid her begone. I will not speak to her or look at her. How came she there? When did she come?"

Then Fanny told her father the whole story,—everything as it occurred, and did not forget to add her own convictions that Carry's life had been decent in all respects since the Vicar had found a home for her in Salisbury. "You would not have it go on like that, father. She is naught to our parson."

"I will pay. As long as there is a shilling left I will pay for her. She shall not live on the charity of any man, whether parson or no parson. But I will not see her. While she be here you may just send me my vittels to the mill. If she be not gone afore night, I will sleep here among the sacks."

She stayed with him till the labourer came, and then she returned to the house, having failed as yet to touch his heart. She went back and told her story to her mother, and then a part of it to Carry, who was still in bed. Indeed, she had found her mother by Carry's bedside, and had to wait until she could separate them before she could tell any story to either. "What does he say of me, Fan?" asked the poor sinner. "Does he say that I must go? Will he never speak to me again? I will just throw myself into the mill-race and have done with it." Her sister bade her to rise and dress herself, but to remain where she was. It could not be expected, she said, but that their father would be hard to persuade. "I know that he will kill me when he sees me," said Carry.

At eight o'clock Fanny took the old man his breakfast to the mill, while Mrs. Brattle waited on Carry, as though she had deserved all the good things which a mother could do for a child. The miller sat upon a

sack at the back of the building, while the hired man took his meal of bread and cheese in the front, and Fanny remained close at his elbow. While the old man was eating she said nothing to him. He was very slow, and sat with his eyes fixed upon the morsel of sky which was visible through the small aperture, thinking evidently of anything but the food that he was swallowing. Presently he returned the empty bowl and plate to his daughter, as though he were about at once to resume his work. Hitherto he had not uttered a single word since she had come to him.

"Father," she said, "think of it. Is it not good to have mercy and to forgive? Would you drive your girl out again upon the streets?"

The miller still did not speak, but turned his face round upon his daughter with a gaze of such agony that she threw herself on the sack beside him, and clung to him with her arms round his neck.

"If she were such as thee, Fan," he said. "Oh, if she were such as thee!" Then again he turned away his face that she might not see the tear that was forcing itself into the corner of his eye.

She remained with him an hour before he moved. His companion in the mill did not come near them, knowing, as the poor do know on such occasions, there was something going on which would lead them to prefer that he should be absent. The words that were said between them were not very many; but at the end of the hour Fanny returned to the house.

"Carry," she said, "father is coming in."

"If he looks at me, it will kill me," said Carry.

Mrs. Brattle was so lost in her hopes and fears that she knew not what to do, or how to bestow herself.

A minute had hardly passed when the miller's step was heard, and Carry knew that she was in the presence of her father. She had been sitting, but now she rose, and went to him and knelt at his feet.

"Father," she said, "if I may abide with you,—if I may abide with you——." But her voice was lost in sobbing, and she could make no promise as to her future conduct.

"She may stay with us," the father said, turning to his eldest daughter; "but I shall never be able to show my face again about the parish."

He had uttered no words of forgiveness to his daughter, nor had he bestowed upon her any kiss. Fanny had raised her when she was on the ground at his feet, and had made her seat herself apart.

"In all the whole world," he said, looking round upon his wife and his elder child, raising his hand as he uttered the words, and speaking with an emphasis that was terrible to the hearers, "there is nothing so vile as a harlot." All the dreaded fierceness of his manner had then come back to him, and neither of them had dared to answer him. After that he at once went back to the mill, and to Fanny, who followed him, he vouchsafed to repeat the permission that his daughter should be allowed to remain beneath his roof.

Between twelve and one she again went to fetch him to his dinner. At first he declared that he would not come, that he was busy, and that he would eat a morsel where he was, in the mill. But Fanny argued the matter with him.

"Is it always to be so, father?"

"I do not know. What matters it, so as I have strength to do a turn of work?"

"It must not be that her presence should drive you

from the house. Think of mother, and what she will suffer. Father, you must come."

Then he allowed himself to be led into the house, and he sat in his accustomed chair, and ate his dinner in gloomy silence. But after dinner he would not smoke.

"I tell 'ee, lass, I do not want the pipe to-day. Now't has got itself done. D'ye think as grist 'll grind itself without hands?"

When Carry said that it would be better than this that she should go again, Fanny told her to remember that evil things could not be cured in a day. With the mother that afternoon was, on the whole, a happy time, for she sat with her lost child's hand within her own. Late in the evening, when the miller returned to his rest, Carry moved about the house softly, resuming some old task to which in former days she had been accustomed; and as she did so the miller's eyes would wander round the room after her; but he did not speak to her on that day, nor did he pronounce her name.

Two other circumstances which bear upon our story occurred at the mill that afternoon. After their tea, at which the miller did not make his appearance, Fanny Brattle put on her bonnet and ran across the fields to the Vicarage. After all the trouble that Mr. Fenwick had taken, it was, she thought, necessary that he should be told what had happened.

"That is the best news," said he, "that I have heard this many a day."

"I knew that you would be glad to hear that the poor child has found her home again." Then Fanny told the whole story,—how Carry had escaped from Salisbury, being driven to do so by fear of the law

proceedings at which she had been summoned to attend, how her father had sworn that he would not yield, and how at length he had yielded. When Fanny told the Vicar and Mrs. Fenwick that the old man had as yet not spoken to his daughter, they both desired her to be of good cheer.

"That will come, Fanny," said Mrs. Fenwick, "if she once be allowed to sit at table with him."

"Of course it will come," said the Vicar. "In a week or two you will find that she is his favourite."

"She was the favourite with us all, sir, once," said Fanny, "and may God send it that it shall be so again. A winsome thing like her is made to be loved. You'll come and see her, Mr. Fenwick, some day?" Mr. Fenwick promised that he would, and Fanny returned to the mill.

The other circumstance was the arrival of Constable Toffy at the mill during Fanny's absence. In the course of the day the news had travelled into the village that Carry Brattle was again at the mill;—and Constable Toffy, who in regard to the Brattle family was somewhat discomfited by the transactions of the previous day at Heytesbury, heard the news. He was aware,—being in that respect more capable than Lord Trowbridge of receiving enlightenment,—that the result of all the inquiries made, in regard to the murder, did, in truth, contain no tittle of evidence against Sam. As constables go, Constable Toffy was a good man, and he would be wronged if it were to be said of him that he regretted Sam's escape; but his nature was as is the nature of constables, and he could not rid himself of that feeling of disappointment which always attends baffled efforts. And though he saw that there was no evidence against Sam, he did not, therefore,

necessarily think that the young man was innocent. It may be doubted whether, to the normal policeman's mind, any man is ever altogether absolved of any crime with which that man's name has been once connected. He felt, therefore, somewhat sore against the Brattles;—and then there was the fact that Carry Brattle, who had been regularly "subpœnaed," had kept herself out of the way,—most flagitiously, illegally, and damnably. She had run off from Salisbury, just as though she were a free person, to do as she pleased with herself, and not subject to police orders! When, therefore, he heard that Carry was at the mill,—she having made herself liable to some terribly heavy fine by her contumacy,—it was manifestly his duty to see after her and let her know that she was wanted.

At the mill he saw only the miller himself, and his visit was not altogether satisfactory. Old Brattle, who understood very little of the case, but who did understand that his own son had been made clear in reference to that accusation, had no idea that his daughter had any concern with that matter, other than what had fallen to her lot in reference to her brother. When, therefore, Toffy inquired after Caroline Brattle, and desired to know whether she was at the mill, and also was anxious to be informed why she had not attended at Heytesbury in accordance with the requirements of the law, the miller turned upon him and declared that if anybody said a word against Sam Brattle in reference to the murder,—the magistrates having settled that matter,—he, Jacob Brattle, old as he was, would "see it out" with that malignant slanderer. Constable Toffy did his best to make the matter clear to the miller, but failed utterly. Had he a warrant to search for anybody? Toffy had no warrant. Toffy only desired to

know whether Caroline Brattle was or was not beneath her father's roof. The old miller, declaring to himself that, though his child had shamed him, he would not deny her now that she was again one of the family, acknowledged so much, but refused the constable admittance to the house.

"But, Mr. Brattle," said the constable, "she was subpœnaed."

"I know now't o' that," answered the miller, not deigning to turn his face round to his antagonist.

"But you know, Mr. Brattle, the law must have its course."

"No, I don't. And it ain't law as you should come here a-hindering o' me; and it ain't law as you should walk that unfortunate young woman off with you to prison."

"But she's wanted, Mr. Brattle;—not in the way of going to prison, but before the magistrates."

"There's a deal of things is wanted as ain't to be had. Anyways, you ain't no call to my house now, and as them as is there is in trouble, I'll ax you to be so kind as—as just to leave us alone."

Toffy, pretending that he was satisfied with the information received, and merely adding that Caroline Brattle must certainly, at some future time, be made to appear before the magistrates at Heytesbury, took his departure with more good-humour than the miller deserved from him, and returned to the village.

CHAPTER XVII

MR. GILMORE'S RUBIES

Mary Lowther struggled hard for a week to reconcile herself to her new fate, and at the end of the week had very nearly given way. The gloom which had fallen upon her acted upon her lover and then reacted upon herself. Could he have been light in hand, could he have talked to her about ordinary subjects, could he have behaved towards her with any even of the light courtesies of the every-day lover, she would have been better able to fight her battle. But when he was with her there was something in his manner which always seemed to accuse her in that she, to whom he was giving so much, would give him nothing in return. He did not complain in words. He did not wilfully resent her coldness to him. But he looked, and walked, and spoke, and seemed to imply by every deed that he was conscious of being an injured man. At the end of the week he made her a handsome present, and in receiving it she had to assume some pleasure. But the failure was complete, and each of the two knew how great was the failure. Of course, there would be other presents. And he had already—already, though no allusion to the day for the marriage had yet been made—begun to press on for those changes in his house for which she would not ask, but which he was determined to effect for her comfort. There had been another visit to the house and gardens, and he had told her that this should be done,—unless she objected; and that that other change should be made, if it were not opposed to

her wishes. She made an attempt to be enthusiastic,—enthusiastic on the wrong side, to be zealous to save him money, and the whole morning was beyond measure sad and gloomy. Then she asked herself whether she meant to go through with it. If not, the sooner she retreated and hid herself and her disgrace for the rest of her life the better. She had accepted him at last, because she had been made to believe that by doing so she would benefit him, and because she had taught herself to think that it was her duty to disregard herself. She had thought of herself till she was sick of the subject. What did it matter,—about herself,—as long as she could be of some service to some one? And so thinking, she had accepted him. But now she had begun to fear that were she to marry this man she could not be of service to him. And when the thing should be done,—if ever it were done,—there would be no undoing it. Would not her life be a life of sin if she were to live as the wife of a man whom she did not love,—while, perhaps, she would be unable not to love another man?

Nothing of all this was told to the Vicar, but Mrs. Fenwick knew what was going on in her friend's mind, and spoke her own very freely. "Hitherto," she said, "I have given you credit all through for good conduct and good feeling; but I shall be driven to condemn you if you now allow a foolish, morbid, sickly idea to interfere with his happiness and your own."

"But what if I can do nothing for his happiness?"

"That is nonsense. He is not a man whom you despise or dislike. If you will only meet him half-way, you will soon find that your sympathies will grow."

"There never will be a spark of sympathy between us."

"Mary, that is most horribly wicked. What you mean is this, that he is not light and gay as a lover. Of course, he remembers the occurrences of the last six months. Of course he cannot be so happy as he might have been had Walter Marrable never been at Loring. There must be something to be conquered, something to be got over, after such an episode. But you may set your face against doing that, or you may strive to do it. For his sake, if not for your own, the struggle should be made."

"A man may struggle to draw a loaded wagon, but he won't move it."

"The load in this case is of your own laying on. One hour of frank kindness on your part would dispel his gloom. He is not gloomy by nature."

Then Mary Lowther tried to achieve that hour of frank kindness and again failed. She failed and was conscious of her failure, and there came a time,—and that within three weeks of her engagement,—in which she had all but made up her mind to return the ring which he had given her, and to leave Bullhampton for ever. Could it be right that she should marry a man that she did not love?

That was her argument with herself, and yet she was deterred from doing as she contemplated by a circumstance which could have had no effect on that argument. She received from her Aunt Marrable the following letter, in which was certainly no word capable of making her think that now, at last, she could love the man whom she had promised to marry. And yet this letter so affected her, that she told herself that she would go on and become the wife of Harry Gilmore. She would struggle yet again, and force herself to succeed. The wagon, no doubt, was heavily laden,

but still, with sufficient labour, it might perhaps be moved.

Miss Marrable had been asked to go over to Dunripple, when Mary Lowther went to Bullhampton. It had been long since she had been there, and she had not thought ever to make such a visit. But there came letters, and there were rejoinders,—which were going on before Mary's departure,—and at last it was determined that Miss Marrable should go to Dunripple, and pay a visit to her cousin. But she did not do this till long after Walter Marrable had left the place. She had written to Mary soon after her arrival, and in this first letter there had been no word about Walter; but in her second letter she spoke very freely of Walter Marrable,—as the reader shall see.

Dunripple, 2nd July, 1868.

"Dear Mary,

"I got your letter on Saturday, and cannot help wishing that it had been written in better spirits. However, I do not doubt but that it will all come right soon. I am quite sure that the best thing you can do is to let Mr. Gilmore name an early day. Of course you never intended that there should be a long engagement. Such a thing, when there is no possible reason for it, must be out of the question. And it will be much better to take advantage of the fine weather than to put it off till the winter has nearly come. Fix some day in August or early in September. I am sure you will be much happier married than you are single; and he will be gratified, which is, I suppose, to count for something.

"I am very happy here, but yet I long to get home. At my time of life, one must always be strange among

strangers. Nothing can be kinder than Sir Gregory, in his sort of fashion. Gregory Marrable, the son, is, I fear, in a bad way. He is unlike his father, and laughs at his own ailments, but everybody in the house, —except perhaps Sir Gregory,—knows that he is very ill. He never comes down at all now, but lives in two rooms, which he has together upstairs. We go and see him every day, but he is hardly able to talk to any one. Sir Gregory never mentions the subject to me, but Mrs. Brownlow is quite confident that if anything were to happen to Gregory Marrable, Walter would be asked to come to Dunripple as the heir, and to give up the army altogether.

"I get on very well with Mrs. Brownlow, but of course we cannot be like old friends. Edith is a very nice girl, but rather shy. She never talks about herself, and is too silent to be questioned. I do not, however, doubt for a moment but that she will be Walter Marrable's wife. I think it likely that they are not engaged as yet, as in that case I think Mrs. Brownlow would tell me; but many things have been said which leave on my mind a conviction that it will be so. He is to be here again in August, and from the way in which Mrs. Brownlow speaks of his coming, there is no doubt that she expects it. That he paid great attention to Edith when he was here before, I am quite sure; and I take it that he is only waiting till——;" in writing so far, Miss Marrable had intended to signify that Captain Marrable had been slow to ask Edith Brownlow to be his wife while he was at Dunripple, because he could not bring himself so soon to show himself indifferent to his former love; but that now he would not hesitate, knowing as he would know, that his former love had bestowed herself elsewhere; but in this there would

have been a grievous accusation against Mary and she was therefore compelled to fill up her sentence in some other form;——"till things should have arranged themselves a little.

"And it will be all for the best. She is a very nice, quiet, lady-like girl, and so great a favourite with her uncle, that should his son die before him, his great object in life will be her welfare. Walter Marrable, as her husband, would live at Dunripple, just as though the place were his own. And indeed there would be no one between him and the property except his own father. Some arrangement could be made as to buying out his life interest,—for which indeed he has taken the money beforehand with a vengeance,—and then Walter would be settled for life. Would not this be all for the best?

"I shall go home about the 14th. They want me to stay, but I shall have been away quite long enough. I don't know whether people ought to go from home at all after a certain age. I get cross because I can't have the sort of chair I like to sit on; and then they don't put any green tea in the pot, and I don't like to ask to have any made, as I doubt whether they have any green tea in the house. And I find it bad to be among invalids with whom, indeed, I can sympathise, but for whom I cannot pretend that I feel any great affection. As we grow old we become incapable of new tenderness, and rather resent the calls that are made upon us for pity. The luxury of devotion to misery is as much the privilege of the young as is that of devotion to love.

"Write soon, dearest; and remember that the best news I can have will be tidings as to the day fixed for your marriage. And remember, too, that I won't have

any question about your being married at Bullhampton. It would be quite improper. He must come to Loring; and I needn't say how glad I shall be to see the Fenwicks. Parson John will expect to marry you, but Mr. Fenwick might come and assist.

"Your most affectionate aunt,

"SARAH MARRABLE."

It was not the entreaty made by her aunt that an early day should be fixed for the marriage which made Mary Lowther determine that she would yet once more attempt to drag the wagon. She could have withstood such entreaty as that, and, had the letter gone no further, would probably have replied to it by saying that no day could be fixed at all. But, with the letter there came an assurance that Walter Marrable had forgotten her, was about to marry Edith Brownlow, and that therefore all ideas of love and truth and sympathy and joint beating of mutual hearts, with the rest of it, might be thrown to the winds. She would marry Harry Gilmore, and take care that he had good dinners, and would give her mind to flannel petticoats and coal for the poor of Bullhampton, and would altogether come down from the pedestal which she had once striven to erect for herself. From that high but tottering pedestal, propped up on shafts of romance and poetry, she would come down; but there would remain for her the lower, firmer standing block, of which duty was the sole support. It was no doubt most unreasonable that any such change should come upon her in consequence of her aunt's letter. She had never for a moment told herself that Walter Marrable could ever be anything to her, since that day on which she had by her own deed liberated him from his troth; and,

indeed, had done more than that, had forced him to accept that liberation. Why then should his engagement with another woman have any effect with her either in one direction or the other? She herself had submitted to a new engagement,—had done so before he had shown any sign of being fickle. She could not therefore be angry with him. And yet, because he could be fickle, because he could do that very thing which she had openly declared her purpose of doing, she persuaded herself,—for a week or two,—that any sacrifice made to him would be a sacrifice to folly, and a neglect of duty.

At this time, during this week or two, there came to her direct from the jewellers in London, a magnificent set of rubies,—ear-rings, brooch, bracelets, and necklace. The rubies she had seen before, and knew that they belonged to Mr. Gilmore's mother. Mrs. Fenwick had told him that the setting was so old that no lady could wear them now, and there had been a presentiment that they would be forthcoming in a new form. Mary had said that, of course, such ornaments as these would come into her hands only when she became Mrs. Gilmore. Mrs. Fenwick had laughed and told her that she did not understand the romantic generosity of her lover. And now the jewellery had come to her at the parsonage without a word from Gilmore, and was spread out in its pretty cases on the Vicarage drawing-room table. Now, if ever, must she say that she could not do as she had promised.

"Mary," said Mrs. Fenwick, "you must go up to him to-morrow, and tell him how noble he is."

Mary waited, perhaps, for a whole minute before she answered. She would willingly have given the jewels away for ever and ever, so that they might not have

been there now to trouble her. But she did answer at last, knowing, as she did so, that her last chance was gone.

"He is noble," she said, slowly; "and I will go and tell him so. I'll go now, if it's not too late."

"Do, do. You'll be sure to find him." And Mrs. Fenwick, in her enthusiasm, embraced her friend and kissed her.

Mary put on her hat and walked off at once through the garden and across the fields, and into the Privets; and close to the house she met her lover. He did not see her till he heard her step, and then turned short round, almost as though fearing something.

"Harry," she said, "those jewels have come. Oh, dear. They are not mine yet. Why did you have them sent to me?"

There was something in the word yet, or in her tone as she spoke it, which made his heart leap as it had never leaped before.

"If they are not yours, I don't know whom they belong to," he said. And his eye was bright, and his voice almost shook with emotion.

"Are you doing anything?" she asked.

"Nothing on earth."

"Then come and see them."

So they walked off, and he, at any rate, on that occasion was a happy lover. For a few minutes,—perhaps for an hour,—he did allow himself to believe that he was destined to enjoy that rapture of requited affection, in longing for which his very soul had become sick. As she walked back with him to the Vicarage her hand rested heavily on his arm, and when she asked him some question about his land, she was able to so modulate her voice as to make him believe

that she was learning to regard his interests as her own. He stopped her at the gate leading into the Vicarage garden, and once more made to her an assurance of his regard.

"Mary," he said, "if love will beget love, I think that you must love me at last."

"I will love you," she said, pressing his arm still more closely. But even then she could not bring herself to tell him that she did love him.

CHAPTER XVIII

GLEBE LAND

The fifteenth of July was a Sunday, and it had been settled for some time past that on this day Mr. Puddleham would preach for the first time in his new chapel. The building had been hurried on through the early summer in order that this might be achieved; and although the fittings were not completed, and the outward signs of the masons and labourers had not been removed,—although the heaps of mortar were still there, and time had not yet sufficed to have the chips cleared away,—on Sunday, the fifteenth of July, the chapel was opened. Great efforts were made to have it filled on the occasion. The builder from Salisbury came over with all his family, not deterred by the consideration that whereas the Puddlehamites of Bullhampton were Primitive Methodists, he was a regular Wesleyan. And many in the parish were got to visit the chapel on this day of its glory, who had less business there than even the builder from Salisbury. In most parishes there are some who think it well to let the parson know that they are independent and do not care for him, though they profess to be of his flock; and then, too, the novelty of the thing had its attraction, and the well-known fact that the site chosen for the building had been as gall and wormwood to the parson and his family. These causes together brought a crowd to the Vicarage-gate on that Sunday morning, and it was quite clear that the new chapel would be

full, and that Mr. Puddleham's first Sunday would be a success. And the chapel, of course, had a bell,—a bell which was declared by Mrs. Fenwick to be the hoarsest, loudest, most unmusical, and ill-founded miscreant of a bell that was ever suspended over a building for the torture of delicate ears. It certainly was a loud and brazen bell; but Mr. Fenwick expressed his opinion that there was nothing amiss with it. When his wife declared that it sounded as though it came from the midst of the shrubs at their own front gate, he reminded her that their own church bells sounded as though they came from the lower garden. That one sound should be held by them to be musical and the other abominable, he declared to be a prejudice. Then there was a great argument about the bells, in which Mrs. Fenwick, and Mary Lowther, and Harry Gilmore were all against the Vicar. And, throughout the discussion, it was known to them all that there were no ears in the parish to which the bells were so really odious as they were to the ears of the Vicar himself. In his heart of hearts he hated the chapel, and, in spite of all his endeavours to the contrary, his feelings towards Mr. Puddleham were not those which the Christian religion requires one neighbour to bear to another. But he made the struggle, and for some weeks past had not said a word against Mr. Puddleham. In regard to the Marquis, the thing was different. The Marquis should have known better, and against the Marquis he did say a great many words.

They began to ring the bell on that Sunday morning before ten o'clock. Mrs. Fenwick was still sitting at the breakfast-table, with the windows open, when the sound was first heard,—first heard, that is, on that

morning. She looked at Mary, groaned, and put her hands to her ears. The Vicar laughed, and walked about the room.

"At what time do they begin?" said Mary.

"Not till eleven," said Mrs. Fenwick. "There, it wants a quarter to ten now, and they mean to go on with that music for an hour and a quarter."

"We shall be keeping them company by-and-by," said the Vicar.

"The poor old church bells won't be heard through it," said Mrs. Fenwick.

Mrs. Fenwick was in the habit of going to the village school for half an hour before the service on Sunday mornings, and on this morning she started from the house according to her custom at a little after ten. Mary Lowther went with her, and as the school was in the village, and could be reached much more shortly by the front gate than by the path round by the church, the two ladies walked out boldly before the new chapel. The reader may perhaps remember that Mrs. Fenwick had promised her husband to withdraw that outward animosity to the chapel which she had evinced by not using the Vicarage entrance. As they went there was a crowd collected, and they found that after the manner of the Primitive Methodists in their more enthusiastic days, a procession of worshippers had been formed in the village, which at this very moment was making its way to the chapel. Mrs. Fenwick, as she stood aside to make way for them, declared that the bell sounded as though it were within her bonnet. When they reached the school they found that many a child was absent who should have been there, and Mrs. Fenwick knew that the truant urchins were amusing themselves at the new building. And

with those who were not truant the clang of the new bell distracted terribly that attention which was due to the collect. Mrs. Fenwick herself confessed afterwards that she hardly knew what she was teaching.

Mr. Fenwick, according to his habit, went into his own study when the ladies went to the school, and there, according to custom also on Sunday mornings, his letters were brought to him, some few minutes before he started on his walk through the garden to the church. On this morning there were a couple of letters for himself, and he opened them both. One was from a tradesman in Salisbury, and the other was from his wife's brother-in-law, Mr. Quickenham. Before he started he read Mr. Quickenham's letter, and then did his best to forget it and put it out of his mind till the morning service should be over. The letter was as follows:—

"Pump Court, June 30, 1868.

"Dear Fenwick,

"I have found, as I thought I should, that Lord Trowbridge has no property in, or right whatever to, the bit of ground on which your enemies have been building their new Ebenezer. The spot is a part of the glebe, and as such seems to have been first abandoned by a certain parson named Brandon, who was your predecessor's predecessor. There can, however, be no doubt that the ground is glebe, and that you are bound to protect it as such, on behalf of your successors, and of the patrons of the living.

"I found some difficulty in getting at the terrier of the parish,—which you, who consider yourself to be a model parson, I dare say, have never seen. I have, however, found it in duplicate. The clerk of the Board of Guardians, who should, I believe, have a copy of it,

knew nothing about it; and had never heard of such a document. Your Bishop's registrar was not much more learned,—but I did find it in the Bishop's chancery; and there is a copy of it also at Saint John's, which seems to imply that great attention has been paid by the college as patron to the interests of the parish priest. This is more than has been done by the incumbent, who seems to be an ignorant fellow in such matters. I wonder how many parsons there are in the Church who would let a Marquis and a Methodist minister between them build a chapel on the parish glebe?

"Yours ever,

"Richard Quickenham.

"If I were to charge you through an attorney for my trouble, you'd have to mortgage your life interest in the bit of land to pay me. I enclose a draft from the terrier as far as the plot of ground and the Vicarage-gate are concerned."

Here was information! This detestable combination of dissenting and tyrannically territorial influences had been used to build a Methodist Chapel upon land of which he, during his incumbency in the parish, was the freehold possessor! What an ass he must have been not to know his own possessions! How ridiculous would he appear when he should come forward to claim as a part of the glebe a morsel of land to which he had paid no special attention whatever since he had been in the parish! And then, what would it be his duty to do? Mr. Quickenham had clearly stated that on behalf of the college, which was the patron of the living, and on behalf of his successors, it was his

duty to claim the land. And was it possible that he should not do so after such usage as he had received from Lord Trowbridge? So meditating,—but grieving that he should be driven at such a moment to have his mind forcibly filled with such matters,—still hearing the chapel bell, which in his ears drowned the sound from his own modest belfry, and altogether doubtful as to what step he would take, he entered his own church. It was manifest to him that the poorer part of his usual audience, and of the smaller farmers, one-half were in attendance upon Mr. Puddleham's triumph.

During the whole of that afternoon he said not a word of the barrister's letter to anyone. He struggled to banish the subject from his thoughts. Failing to do that, he did banish it from his tongue. The letter was in the pocket of his coat; but he showed it to no one. Gilmore dined at the Vicarage; but even to him he was silent. Of course the conversation at dinner turned upon the chapel. It was impossible that on such a day they should speak of anything else. Even as they sat at their early dinner Mr. Puddleham's bell was ringing, and no doubt there was a vigour in the pulling of it which would not be maintained when the pulling of it should have become a thing of every week. There had been a compact made, in accordance with which the Vicar's wife was to be debarred from saying anything against the chapel, and, no doubt, when the compact was made, the understanding was that she should give over hating the chapel. This had, of course, been found to be impossible, but in a certain way she had complied with the compact. The noise of the bell, however, was considered to be beyond the compact, and on this occasion she was almost violent in the expression of her wrath. Her husband listened

to her, and sat without rebuking her, silent, with the lawyer's letter in his pocket. This bell had been put up on his own land, and he could pull it down to-morrow. It had been put up by the express agency of Lord Trowbridge, and with the direct view of annoying him; and Lord Trowbridge had behaved to him in a manner which set all Christian charity at defiance.

He told himself plainly that he had no desire to forgive Lord Trowbridge,—that life in this world, as it is constituted, would not be compatible with such forgiveness,—that he would not, indeed, desire to injure Lord Trowbridge otherwise than by exacting such penalty as would force him and such as he to restrain their tyranny; but that to forgive him, till he should have been so forced, would be weak and injurious to the community. As to that, he had quite made up his mind, in spite of all doctrine to the contrary. Men in this world would have to go naked if they gave their coats to the robbers who took their cloaks; and going naked is manifestly inexpedient. His office of parish priest would be lowered in the world if he forgave, out of hand, such offences as these which had been committed against him by Lord Trowbridge. This he understood clearly. And now he might put down, not only the bell, but with the bell the ill-conditioned peer who had caused it to be put up—on glebe land. All this went through his mind again and again, as he determined that on that day, being Sunday, he would think no more about it.

When the Monday came it was necessary that he should show the letter to his wife,—to his wife, and to the Squire, and to Mary Lowther. He had no idea of keeping the matter secret from his near friends and

advisers; but he had an idea that it would be well that he should make up his mind as to what he would do before he asked their advice. He started, therefore, for a turn through the parish before breakfast on Monday morning,—and resolved as to his course of action. On no consideration whatever would he have the chapel pulled down. It was necessary for his purpose that he should have his triumph over the Marquis,—and he would have it. But the chapel had been built for a good purpose, which it would adequately serve, and let what might be said to him by his wife or others, he would not have a brick of it disturbed. No doubt he had no more power to give the land for its present or any other purpose than had the Marquis. It might very probably be his duty to take care that the land was not appropriated to wrong purposes. It might be that he had already neglected his duty, in not knowing, or in not having taken care to learn the precise limits of the glebe which had been given over to him for his use during his incumbency. Nevertheless, there was the chapel, and there it should stand, as far as he was concerned. If the churchwardens, or the archdeacon, or the college, or the Bishop had power to interfere, as to which he was altogether ignorant, and chose to exercise that power he could not help it. He was nearly sure that his own churchwardens would be guided altogether by himself,—and as far as he was concerned the chapel should remain unmolested. Having thus resolved, he came back to breakfast, and read Mr. Quickenham's letter aloud to his wife and Mary Lowther.

"Glebe!" said the Vicar's wife.

"Do you mean that it is part of your own land?" asked Mary.

"Exactly that," said the Vicar.

"And that old thief of a Marquis has given away what belongs to us?" said Mrs. Fenwick.

"He has given away what did not belong to himself," said the Vicar. "But I can't admit that he's a thief."

"Surely he ought to have known," said Mary.

"As for that, so ought I to have known, I suppose. The whole thing is one of the most ridiculous mistakes that ever was made. It has absolutely come to pass that here, in the middle of Wiltshire, with all our maps, and surveys, and parish records, no one concerned has known to whom belonged a quarter of an acre of land in the centre of the village. It is just a thing to write an article about in a newspaper; but I can't say that one party is more to blame than the other; that is, in regard to the ignorance displayed."

"And what will you do, Frank?"

"Nothing."

"You will do nothing, Frank?"

"I will do nothing; but I will take care to let the Marquis know the nature of his generosity. I fancy that I am bound to take on myself that labour, and I must say that it won't trouble me much to have to write the letter."

"You won't pull it down, Frank?"

"No, my dear."

"I would, before a week was over."

"So would I," said Mary. "I don't think it ought to be there."

"Of course it ought not to be there," said Mrs. Fenwick.

"They might as well have it here in the garden," said Mary.

"Just the same," said Mrs. Fenwick.

"It is not in the garden; and, as it has been built, it shall remain,—so far as I am concerned. I shall rather like it, now that I know I am the landlord. I think I shall claim a sitting." This was the Vicar's decision on the Monday morning, and from that decision the two ladies were quite unable to move him.

This occurred a day or two after the affair of the rubies, and at a time when Mary was being very hard pressed to name a day for her wedding. Of course such pressure had been the result of Mr. Gilmore's success on that occasion. She had then resolutely gone to work to overcome her own, and his, melancholy gloom, and, having in a great degree succeeded, it was only natural that he should bring up that question of his marriage day. She, when she had accepted him, had done so with a stipulation that she should not be hurried; but we all know what such stipulations are worth. Who is to define what is and what is not hurry? They had now been engaged a month, and the Squire was clearly of opinion that there had been no hurry. "September was the nicest month in the year," he said, "for getting married and going abroad. September in Switzerland, October among the Italian lakes, November in Florence and Rome. So that they might get home before Christmas after a short visit to Naples." That was the Squire's programme, and his whole manner was altered as he made it. He thought he knew the nature of the girl well enough to be sure that, though she would profess no passionate love for him before starting on such a journey, she would change her tone before she returned. It should be no fault of his if she did not change it. Mary had at first declined to fix any day, had talked of next year, had declared that

she would not be hurried. She had carried on the fight even after the affair of the rubies, but she had fought in opposition to strong and well-disciplined forces on the other side, and she had begun to admit to herself that it might be expedient that she should yield. The thing was to be done, and why not have it done at once? She had not as yet yielded, but she had begun to think that she would yield.

At such a period it was of course natural that the Squire should be daily at the Vicarage, and on this Monday morning he came down while the minds of all his friends there were intent on the strange information received from Mr. Quickenham. The Vicar was not by when Mr. Gilmore was told, and he was thus easily induced to join in the opinion that the chapel should be made to disappear. He had a landlord's idea about land, and was thoroughly well-disposed to stop any encroachment on the part of the Marquis.

"Lord Trowbridge must pull it down himself, and put it up again elsewhere," said the Squire.

"But Frank says that he won't let the Marquis pull it down," said Mrs. Fenwick, almost moved to tears by the tragedy of the occasion.

Then the Vicar joined them, and the matter was earnestly debated;—so earnestly that, on that occasion, not a word was said as to the day of the wedding.

CHAPTER XIX

THE VICAR'S VENGEANCE

No eloquence on the part of the two ladies at the Vicarage, or of the Squire, could turn Mr. Fenwick from his purpose, but he did consent at last to go over with the Squire to Salisbury, and to consult Mr. Chamberlaine. A proposition was made to him as to consulting the Bishop, for whom personally he always expressed a liking, and whose office he declared that he held in the highest veneration; but he explained that this was not a matter in which the Bishop should be invited to exercise authority.

"The Bishop has nothing to do with my freehold," he said.

"But if you want an opinion," said the Squire, "why not go to a man whose opinion will be worth having?"

Then the Vicar explained again. His respect for the Bishop was so great, that any opinion coming from his lordship would, to him, be more than advice; it would be law. So great was his mingled admiration of the man and respect for the office!

"What he means," said Mrs. Fenwick, "is, that he won't go to the Bishop, because he has made up his mind already. You are, both of you, throwing away your time and money in going to Salisbury at all."

"I'm not sure but what she's right there," said the Vicar. Nevertheless, they went to Salisbury.

The Rev. Henry Fitzackerley Chamberlaine was very eloquent, clear, and argumentative on the subject, and

perhaps a little overbearing. He insisted that the chapel should be removed without a moment's delay; and that notice as to its removal should be served upon all the persons concerned,—upon Mr. Puddleham, upon the builder, upon the chapel trustees, the elders of the congregation,—"if there be any elders," said Mr. Chamberlaine, with a delightful touch of irony,—and upon the Marquis and the Marquis's agent. He was eloquent, authoritative, and loud. When the Vicar remarked that after all the chapel had been built for a good purpose, Mr. Chamberlaine became quite excited in his eloquence.

"The glebe of Bullhampton, Mr. Fenwick," said he, "has not been confided to your care for the propagation of dissent."

"Nor has the Vicarage house been confided to me for the reading of novels; but that is what goes on there."

"The house is for your private comfort," said the Prebendary.

"And so is the glebe," said the Vicar; "and I shall not be comfortable if I make these people put down a house of prayer."

And there was another argument against the Vicar's views, very strong. This glebe was only given to him in trust. He was bound so to use it, that it should fall into the hands of his successor unimpaired and with full capability for fruition. "You have no right to leave to another the demolition of a building, the erection of which you should have prevented." This argument was more difficult of answer than the other, but Mr. Fenwick did answer it.

"I feel all that," said he; "and I think it likely that my estate may be liable for the expense of re-

moval. The chapel may be brought in as a dilapidation. But that which I can answer with my purse need not lie upon my conscience. I could let the bit of land, no doubt,—though not on a building lease."

"But they have built on it," said Mr. Chamberlaine.

"No doubt, they have; and I can see that my estate may be called upon to restore the bit of ground to its former position. What I can't see is, that I am bound to enforce the removal now."

Mr. Chamberlaine took up the matter with great spirit, and gave a couple of hours to the discussion, but the Vicar was not shaken.

The Vicar was not shaken, but his manner as he went out from the Prebendary's presence left some doubt as to his firmness in the mind both of that dignitary and of the Squire. He thanked Mr. Chamberlaine very courteously, and acknowledged that there was a great deal in the arguments which had been used.

"I am sure you will find it best to clear your ground of the nuisance at once," said Mr. Chamberlaine, with that high tone which he knew so well how to assume; and these were the last words spoken.

"Well?" said the Squire, as soon as they were out in the Close, asking his friend as to his decision.

"It's a very knotty point," said Fenwick.

"I don't much like my uncle's tone," said the Squire; "I never do. But I think he is right."

"I won't say but what he may be."

"It will have to come down, Frank," said the Squire.

"No doubt, some day. But I am quite sure as to this, Harry; that when you have a doubt as to your duty, you can't be wrong in delaying that, the doing of which would gratify your own ill will. Don't you

go and tell this to the women; but to my eyes that conventicle at Bullhampton is the most hideous, abominable, and disagreeable object that ever was placed upon the earth!"

"So it is to mine," said the Squire.

"And therefore I won't touch a brick of it. It shall be my hair shirt, my fast day, my sacrifice of a broken heart, my little pet good work. It will enable me to take all the good things of the world that come in my way, and flatter myself that I am not self-indulgent. There is not a dissenter in Bullhampton will get so much of the chapel as I will."

"I fancy they can make you have it pulled down."

"Then their making me shall be my hair shirt, and I shall be fitted just as well." Upon that they went back to Bullhampton, and the Squire told the two ladies what had passed; as to the hair shirt and all.

Mr. Fenwick, in making for himself his hair shirt, did not think it necessary to abstain from writing to the Marquis of Trowbridge. This he did on that same day, after his return from Salisbury. In the middle of the winter he had written a letter to the Marquis, remonstrating against the building of the chapel opposite to his own gate. He now took out his copy of that letter, and the answer to it, in which the agent of the Marquis had told him that the Marquis considered that the spot in question was the most eligible site which his lordship could bestow for the purpose in question. Our Vicar was very anxious not to disturb the chapel now that it was built; but he was quite as anxious to disturb the Marquis. In the formation of that hair shirt which he was minded to wear, he did not intend to weave in any mercy towards the Marquis. It behooved him to punish the Marquis,—for the good of

society in general. As a trespasser he forgave the Marquis, in a Christian point of view; but as a pestilent wasp on the earth, stinging folks right and left with an arrogance, the ignorance of which was the only excuse to be made for his cruelty, he thought it to be his duty to set his heel upon the Marquis; which he did by writing the following letter:—

"Bullhampton Vicarage, July 18, 186—.

"My Lord Marquis,

"On the 3rd of January last I ventured to write to your lordship with the object of saving myself and my family from a great annoyance, and of saving you also from the disgrace of subjecting me to it. I then submitted to you the expediency of giving in the parish some other site for the erection of a dissenting chapel than the small patch of ground immediately opposite to the Vicarage gate, which, as I explained to you, I had always regarded as belonging to the Vicarage. I did not for a moment question your lordship's right to give the land in question, but appealed simply to your good-feeling. I confess that I took it for granted that even your lordship, in so very high-handed a proceeding, would take care to have right on your side. In answer to this I received a letter from your man of business, of which, as coming from him, I do not complain, but which, as a reply to my letter to your lordship, was an insult. The chapel has been built, and on last Sunday was opened for worship.

"I have now learned that the land which you have given away did not belong to your lordship, and never formed a portion of the Stowte estate in this parish. It was, and is, glebe land; and formed, at the time of your bestowal, a portion of my freehold as Vicar. I

acknowledge that I was remiss in presuming that you as a landlord knew the limits of your own rights, and that you should not trespass beyond them. I should have made my inquiry more urgently. I have made it now, and your lordship may satisfy yourself by referring to the maps of the parish lands, which are to be found in the Bishop's chancery, and also at St. John's, Oxford, if you cannot do so by any survey of the estate in your own possession. I enclose a sketch showing the exact limits of the glebe in respect to the Vicarage entrance and the patch of ground in question. The fact is, that the chapel in question has been built on the glebe land by authority—illegally and unjustly given by your lordship.

"The chapel is there, and though it is a pity that it should have been built, it would be a greater pity that it should be pulled down. It is my purpose to offer to the persons concerned a lease of the ground for the term of my incumbency at a nominal rent. I presume that a lease may be so framed as to protect the rights of my successor.

"I will not conclude this letter without expressing my opinion that gross as has been your lordship's ignorance in giving away land which did not belong to you, your fault in that respect has been very trifling in comparison with the malice you have shown to a clergyman of your own church, settled in a parish partly belonging to yourself, in having caused the erection of this chapel on the special spot selected with no other object than that of destroying my personal comfort and that of my wife.

"I have the honour to be

"Your lordship's most obedient servant,

"FRANCIS FENWICK."

When he had finished his epistle he read it over more than once, and was satisfied that it would be vexatious to the Marquis. It was his direct object to vex the Marquis, and he had set about it with all his vigour. "I would skin him if I knew how," he had said to Gilmore. "He has done that to me which no man should forgive. He has spoken ill of me, and calumniated me, not because he has thought ill of me, but because he has had a spite against me. They may keep their chapel as far as I am concerned. But as for his lordship, I should think ill of myself if I spared him." He had his lordship on the hip, and he did not spare him. He showed the letter to his wife.

"Isn't malice a very strong word?" she said.

"I hope so," answered the Vicar.

"What I mean is, might you not soften it without hurting your cause?"

"I think not. I conscientiously believe the accusation to be true. I endeavour so to live among my neighbours that I may not disgrace them, or you, or myself. This man has dared to accuse me openly of the grossest immorality and hypocrisy, when I am only doing my duty as I best know how to do it; and I do now believe in my heart that in making these charges he did not himself credit them. At any rate, no man can be justified in making such charges without evidence."

"But all that had nothing to do with the bit of ground, Frank."

"It is part and parcel of the same thing. He has chosen to treat me as an enemy, and has used all the influence of his wealth and rank to injure me. Now he must look to himself. I will not say a word of him, or to him, that is untrue; but as he has said evil of

me behind my back, which he did not believe, so will I say the evil of him, which I do believe, to his face." The letter was sent, and before the day was over the Vicar had recovered his good humour.

And before the day was over the news was all through the parish. There was a certain ancient shoemaker in the village who had carried on business in Devizes, and had now retired to spend the evening of his life in his native place. Mr. Bolt was a quiet, inoffensive old man, but he was a dissenter, and was one of the elders and trustees who had been concerned in raising money for the chapel. To him the Vicar had told the whole story, declaring at the same time that, as far as he was concerned, Mr. Puddleham and his congregation should, at any rate for the present, be made welcome to their chapel. This he had done immediately on his return from Salisbury, and before the letter to the Marquis was written. Mr. Bolt, not unnaturally, saw his minister the same evening, and the thing was discussed in full conclave by the Puddlehamites. At the end of that discussion, Mr. Puddleham expressed his conviction that the story was a mare's nest from beginning to end. He didn't, couldn't, believe a word of it. The Marquis was not the man to give away anything that did not belong to him. Somebody had hoaxed the Vicar, or the Vicar had hoaxed Mr. Bolt; or else,—which Mr. Puddleham thought to be most likely,—the Vicar had gone mad with vexation at the glory and the triumph of the new chapel.

"He was uncommon civil," said Mr. Bolt, who at this moment was somewhat inclined to favour the Vicar.

"No doubt, Mr. Bolt; no doubt," said Mr. Puddleham, who had quite recovered from his first dismay, and had worked himself up to a state of eloquent

enthusiasm. "I dare say he was civil. Why not? In old days, when we hardly dared to talk of having a decent house of prayer of our own in which to worship our God, he was always civil. No one has ever heard me accuse Mr. Fenwick of incivility. But will anyone tell me that he is a friend to our mode of worship? Gentlemen, we must look to ourselves, and I for one tell you that that chapel is ours. You won't find that his ban will keep me out of my pulpit. Glebe, indeed! why should the Vicar have glebe on the other side of the road from his house? Or, for the matter of that, why should he have glebe at all?" This was so decisive that no one at the meeting had a word to say after Mr. Puddleham had finished his speech.

When the Marquis received his letter he was up in London. Lord Trowbridge was not much given to London life, but was usually compelled by circumstances,—the circumstances being the custom of society as pleaded by his two daughters,—to spend the months of May, June, and July at the family mansion in Grosvenor Square. Moreover, though the Marquis never opened his mouth in the House of Lords, it was, as he thought, imperative on him to give the leader of his party the occasional support of his personal presence. Our Vicar, knowing this, had addressed his letter to Grosvenor Square, and it had thus reached its destination without loss of time. Lord Trowbridge by this time knew the handwriting of his enemy; and, as he broke the envelope, there came upon him an idea that it might be wise to refuse the letter, and to let it go back to its writer unopened. It was beneath his dignity to correspond with a man, or to receive letters from a man, who would probably insult him. But before he could make up his mind the envelope had been

opened, and the letter had been read. His wrath, when he had read it, no writer of a simple prose narration should attempt to describe. "Disgrace," "insult," "ignorance," and "malice,"—these were the words with which the Marquis found himself pelted by this pestilent, abominable, and most improper clergyman. As to the gist of the letter itself, it was some time before he understood it. And when he did begin to understand it, he did not as yet begin to believe it. His intelligence worked slowly, whereas his wrath worked quickly. But at last he began to ask himself whether the accusation made against him could possibly be based on truth. When the question of giving the land had been under consideration, it had never occurred to anyone concerned that it could belong to the glebe. There had been some momentary suspicion that the spot might possibly have been so long used as common land as to give room for a question on that side; but no one had dreamed that any other claimant could arise. That the whole village of Bullhampton belonged to the Marquis was notorious. Of course there was the glebe. But who could think that the morsel of neglected land lying on the other side of the road belonged to the Vicarage? The Marquis did not believe it now. This was some piece of wickedness concocted by the venomous brain of the iniquitous Vicar, more abominable than all his other wickednesses. The Marquis did not believe it; but he walked up and down his room all the morning thinking of it. The Marquis was sure that it was not true, and yet he could not for a moment get the idea out of his mind. Of course he must tell St. George. The language of the letter which had been sent to him was so wicked, that St. George must at least agree with him now in

his anger against this man. And could nothing be done to punish the man? Prosecutions in regard to anonymous letters, threatening letters, begging letters, passed through his mind. He knew that punishment had been inflicted on the writers of insolent letters to royalty. And letters had been proved to be criminal as being libellous,—only then they must be published; and letters were sometimes held to form a conspiracy; —but he could not quite see his way to that. He knew that he was not royal; and he knew that the Vicar neither threatened him or begged aught from him. What if St. George should tell him again that this Vicar had right on his side? He cast the matter about in his mind all the day; and then, late in the afternoon, he got into his carriage, and had himself driven to the chambers of Messrs. Boothby, the family lawyers.

CHAPTER XX

OIL IS TO BE THROWN UPON THE WATERS

Messrs. Boothby in Lincoln's Inn had for very many years been the lawyers of the Stowte family, and probably knew as much about the property as any of the Stowtes themselves. They had not been consulted about the giving away of the bit of land for the chapel purposes, nor had they been instructed to draw up any deed of gift. The whole thing had been done irregularly. The land had been only promised, and not in truth as yet given, and the Puddlehamites, in their hurry, had gone to work and had built upon a promise. The Marquis, when, after the receipt of Mr. Fenwick's letter, his first rage was over, went at once to the chambers of Messrs. Boothby, and was forced to explain all the circumstances of the case to the senior partner before he could show the clergyman's wicked epistle. Old Mr. Boothby was a man of the same age as the Marquis, and, in his way, quite as great. Only the lawyer was a clever old man, whereas the Marquis was a stupid old man. Mr. Boothby sat, bowing his head, as the Marquis told the story. The story was rather confused, and for awhile Mr. Boothby could only understand that a dissenting chapel had been built upon his client's land.

"We shall have to set it right by some scrap of a conveyance," said the lawyer.

"But the Vicar of the parish claims it," said the Marquis.

"Claims the chapel, my lord?"

"He is a most pestilent, abominable man, Mr. Boothby. I have brought his letter here."

Mr. Boothby held out his hand to receive the letter. From almost any client he would prefer a document to an oral explanation, but he would do so especially from his lordship.

"But you must understand," continued the Marquis, "that he is quite unlike any ordinary clergyman. I have the greatest respect for the church, and am always happy to see a clergyman at my own house. But this is a litigious, quarrelsome fellow. They tell me he's an infidel, and he keeps——! Altogether, Mr. Boothby, nothing can be worse."

"Indeed!" said the lawyer, still holding out his hand for the letter.

"He has taken the trouble to insult me continually. You heard how a tenant of mine was murdered? He was murdered by a young man whom this clergyman screens, because,—because,—he is the brother of,—of,—of the young woman."

"That would be very bad, my lord."

"It is very bad. He knows all about the murder;—I am convinced he does. He went bail for the young man. He used to associate with him on most intimate terms. As to the sister;—there's no doubt about that. They live on the land of a person who owns a small estate in the parish."

"Mr. Gilmore, my lord?"

"Exactly so. This Mr. Fenwick has got Mr. Gilmore in his pocket. You can have no idea of such a state of things as this. And now he writes me this letter! I know his handwriting now, and any further communication I shall return." The Marquis ceased

to speak, and the lawyer at once buried himself in the letter.

"It is meant to be offensive," said the lawyer.

"Most insolent, most offensive, most improper! And yet the Bishop upholds him!"

"But if he is right about the bit of land, my lord, it will be rather awkward." And as he spoke, the lawyer examined the sketch of the Vicarage entrance. "He gives this as copied from the terrier of the parish, my lord?"

"I don't believe a word of it," said the Marquis.

"You didn't look at the plan of the estate, my lord?"

"I don't think we did; but Packer had no doubt. No one knows the property so well in Bullhampton as Packer, and Packer said——"

But while the Marquis was still speaking the lawyer rose, and begging his client's pardon, went to the clerk in the outer room. Nor did he return till the clerk had descended to an iron chamber in the basement, and returned from thence with a certain large tin box. Into this a search was made, and presently Mr. Boothby came back with a weighty lump of dusty vellum documents, and a manuscript map, or sketch of a survey of the Bullhampton estate, which he had had opened. While the search was being made he had retired to another room, and had had a little conversation with his partner about the weather. "I am afraid the parson is right, my lord," said Mr. Boothby, as he closed the door.

"Right!"

"Right in his facts, my lord. It is glebe, and is marked so here very plainly. There should have been a reference to us,—there should, indeed, my lord.

Packer, and men like him, really know nothing. The truth is, in such matters nobody knows anything. You should always have documentary evidence."

"And it is glebe?"

"Not a doubt of it, my lord."

Then the Marquis knew that his enemy had him on the hip, and he laid his old head down upon his folded arms and wept. In his weeping it is probable that no tears rolled down his cheeks, but he wept inward tears, —tears of hatred, remorse, and self-commiseration. His enemy had struck him with scourges, and, as far as he could see at present, he could not return a blow. And he must submit himself,—must restore the bit of land, and build those nasty dissenters a chapel elsewhere on his own property. He had not a doubt as to that for a moment. Could he have escaped the shame of it,—as far as the expense was concerned, he would have been willing to build them ten chapels. And in doing this he would give a triumph, an unalloyed triumph, to a man whom he believed to be thoroughly bad. The Vicar had accused the Marquis of spreading reports which he, the Marquis, did not himself believe; but the Marquis believed them all. At this moment there was no evil that he could not have believed of Mr. Fenwick. While sitting there an idea, almost amounting to a conviction, had come upon him, that Mr. Fenwick had himself been privy to the murder of old Trumbull. What would not a parson do who would take delight in insulting and humiliating the nobleman who owned the parish in which he lived? To Lord Trowbridge the very fact that the parson of the parish which he regarded as his own was opposed to him proved sufficiently that that parson was,—scum, dregs, riff-raff, a low radical, and everything that a

parson ought not to be. The Vicar had been wrong there. The Marquis did believe it all religiously.

"What must I do?" said the Marquis.

"As to the chapel itself, my lord, the Vicar, bad as he is, does not want to move it."

"It must come down," said the Marquis, getting up from his chair. "It shall come down. Do you think that I would allow it to stand when it has been erected on his ground,—through my error? Not for a day!—not for an hour! I'll tell you what, Mr. Boothby,—that man has known it all through;—has known it as well as you do now; but he has waited till the building was complete before he would tell me. I see it all as plain as the nose on your face, Mr. Boothby."

The lawyer was meditating how best he might explain to his angry client that he had no power whatever to pull down the building,—that if the Vicar and the dissenting minister chose to agree about it the new building must stand, in spite of the Marquis,—must stand, unless the churchwardens, patron, or ecclesiastical authorities generally should force the Vicar to have it removed,—when a clerk came in and whispered a word to the attorney. "My lord," said Mr. Boothby, "Lord St. George is here. Shall he come in?"

The Marquis did not wish to see his son exactly at this minute; but Lord St. George was, of course, admitted. This meeting at the lawyer's chambers was altogether fortuitous, and father and son were equally surprised. But so great was the anger and dismay and general perturbation of the Marquis at the time, that he could not stop to ask any question. St. George must, of course, know what had happened, and it was quite as well that he should be told at once.

"That bit of ground they've built the chapel on at

Bullhampton turns out to be—glebe," said the Marquis. Lord St. George whistled. "Of course, Mr. Fenwick knew it all along," said the Marquis.

"I should hardly think that," said his son.

"You read his letter. Mr. Boothby, will you be so good as to show Lord St. George the letter? You never read such a production. Impudent scoundrel! Of course he knew it all the time."

Lord St. George read the letter. "He is very impudent, whether he be a scoundrel or not."

"Impudent is no word for it."

"Perhaps he has had some provocation, my lord."

"Not from me, St. George;—not from me. I have done nothing to him. Of course the chapel must be—removed."

"Don't you think the question might stand over for awhile?" suggested Mr. Boothby. "Matters would become smoother in a month or two."

"Not for an hour," said the Marquis.

Lord St. George walked about the room with the letter in his hand, meditating. "The truth is," he said, at last, "we have made a mistake, and we must get out of it as best we can. I think my father is a little wrong about this clergyman's character."

"St. George! Have you read his letter? Is that a proper letter to come from a clergyman of the Church of England to—to—to——" the Marquis longed to say to the Marquis of Trowbridge; but he did not dare so to express himself before his son,—"to the landlord of his parish?"

"A red-brick chapel, just close to your lodge, isn't nice, you know."

"He has got no lodge," said the Marquis.

"And so we thought we'd build him one. Let me

manage this. I'll see him, and I'll see the minister, and I'll endeavour to throw some oil upon the waters."

"I don't want to throw oil upon the waters."

"Lord St. George is in the right, my lord," said the attorney; "he really is. It is a case in which we must throw a little oil upon the waters. We've made a mistake, and when we've done that we should always throw oil upon the waters. I've no doubt Lord St. George will find a way out of it." Then the father and son went away together, and before they had reached the Houses of Parliament Lord St. George had persuaded his father to place the matter of the Bullhampton chapel in his hands. "And as for the letter," said St. George, "do not you notice it."

"I have not the slightest intention of noticing it," said the Marquis, haughtily.

CHAPTER XXI

EDITH BROWNLOW'S DREAM

"My dear, sit down; I want to speak to you. Do you know I should like to see you—married." This speech was made at Dunripple to Edith Brownlow by her uncle, Sir Gregory, one morning in July, as she was attending him with his breakfast. His breakfast consisted always of a cup of chocolate, made after a peculiar fashion, and Edith was in the habit of standing by the old man's bedside while he took it. She would never sit down, because she knew that were she to do so she would be pretty nearly hidden out of sight in the old arm-chair that stood at the bed-head; but now she was specially invited to do so, and that in a manner which almost made her think that it would be well that she should hide herself for a space. But she did not sit down. There was the empty cup to be taken from Sir Gregory's hands, and, after the first moment of surprise, Edith was not quite sure that it would be good that she should hide herself. She took the cup and put it on the table, and then returned, without making any reply. "I should like very much to see you married, my dear," said Sir Gregory, in the mildest of voices.

"Do you want to get rid of me, uncle?"

"No, my dear; that is just what I don't want. Of course you'll marry somebody."

"I don't see any of course, Uncle Gregory."

"But why shouldn't you? I suppose you have thought about it?"

"Only in a general way, Uncle Gregory."

Sir Gregory Marrable was not a wise man. His folly was of an order very different from that of Lord Trowbridge,—very much less likely to do harm to himself or others, much more innocent, and, folly though it was, a great deal more compatible with certain intellectual gifts. Lord Trowbridge, not to put too fine a point upon it, was a fool all round. He was much too great a fool to have an idea of his own folly. Now Sir Gregory distrusted himself in everything, conceived himself to be a poor creature, would submit himself to a child on any question of literature, and had no opinion of his own on any matter outside his own property,—and even as to that his opinion was no more than lukewarm. Yet he read a great deal, had much information stored away somewhere in his memory, and had learned at any rate to know how small a fly he was himself on the wheel of the world. But, alas, when he did meddle with anything he was apt to make a mess of it. There had been some conversation between him and his sister-in-law, Edith's mother, about Walter Marrable; some also between him and his son, and between him and Miss Marrable, his cousin. But as yet no one had spoken to Edith, and as Captain Marrable himself had not spoken, it would have been as well, perhaps, if Sir Gregory had held his tongue. After Edith's last answer the old man was silent for awhile, and then he returned to the subject with a downright question,—

"How did you like Walter when he was here?"

"Captain Marrable?"

"Yes,—Captain Marrable."

"I liked him well enough,—in a way, Uncle Gregory."

"Nothing would please me so much, Edith, as that

you should become his wife. You know that Dunripple will belong to him some day."

"If Gregory does not marry." Edith had hardly known whether to say this or to leave it unsaid. She was well aware that her cousin Gregory would never marry,—that he was a confirmed invalid, a man already worn out, old before his time, and with one foot in the grave. But had she not said it, she would have seemed to herself to have put him aside as a person altogether out of the way.

"Gregory will never marry. Of course while he lives Dunripple will be his; but if Walter were to marry he would make arrangements. I dare say you can't understand all about that, my dear; but it would be a very good thing. I should be so happy if I thought that you were to live at Dunripple always."

Edith kissed him and escaped without giving any other answer. Ten days after that Walter Marrable was to be again at Dunripple,—only for a few days; but still in a few days the thing might be settled. Edith had heard something of Mary Lowther, but not much. There had been some idea of a match between Walter and his Cousin Mary, but the idea had been blown away. So much Edith had heard. To herself Walter Marrable had been very friendly, and, in truth, she had liked him much. They two were not cousins, but they were so connected, and had for some weeks been so thrown together, as to be almost as good as cousins. His presence at Dunripple had been very pleasant to her, but she had never thought of him as a lover. And she had an idea of her own, that girls ought not to think of men as lovers without a good deal of provocation.

Sir Gregory spoke to Mrs. Brownlow on the same

subject, and as he told her what had taken place between him and Edith, she felt herself compelled to speak to her daughter.

"If it should take place, my dear, it would be very well; but I would rather your uncle had not mentioned it."

"It won't do any harm, mamma. I mean, that I shan't break my heart."

"I believe him to be a very excellent young man, —not at all like his father, who has been as bad as he can be."

"Wasn't he in love with Mary Lowther last winter?"

"I don't know, my dear. I never believe stories of this kind. When I hear that a young man is going to be married to a young lady, then I believe that they are in love with each other."

"It is to be hoped so then, mamma?"

"But I never believe any thing before. And I think you may take it for granted that there is nothing in that."

"It would be nothing to me, mamma."

"It might be something. But I will say nothing more about it. You've so much good sense that I am quite sure you won't get into trouble. I wish Sir Gregory had not spoken to you; but as he has, it may be as well that you should know that the family arrangement would be very agreeable to your uncle and to Cousin Gregory. The title and the property must go to Captain Marrable at last, and Sir Gregory would make immediate sacrifices for you, which perhaps he would not make for him."

Edith understood all about it very clearly, and would have understood all about it with half the words. She would have little or no fortune of her own, and in

money her uncle would have very little to give to her. Indeed, there was no reason why he should give her anything. She was not connected with any of the Marrables by blood, though chance had caused her to live at Dunripple almost all her life. She had become half a Marrable already, and it might be very well that she should become a Marrable altogether. Walter was a remarkably handsome man, would be a baronet, and would have an estate, and might, perhaps, have the enjoyment of the estate by marrying her earlier than he would were he to marry any one else. Edith Brownlow understood it all with sufficient clearness. But then she understood also that young women shouldn't give away their hearts before they are asked for them; and she was quite sure that Walter Marrable had made no sign of asking for hers. Nevertheless, within her own bosom, she did become a little anxious about Mary Lowther, and she wished that she knew that story.

On the fourth of August Walter Marrable reached Dunripple, and found the house given up almost entirely to the doctor. Both his uncle and his cousin were very ill. When he was able to obtain from the doctor information on which he could rely, he learned that Mr. Marrable was in real danger, but that Sir Gregory's ailment was no more than his usual infirmity heightened by anxiety on behalf of his son. "Your uncle may live for the next ten years," said the doctor; "but I do not know what to say about Mr. Marrable." All this time the care and time of the two ladies were divided between the invalids. Mrs. Brownlow tended her nephew, and Edith, as usual, waited upon Sir Gregory. In such circumstances it was not extraordinary that Edith Brownlow and Walter Marrable should be thrown much together,—especially as it was the desire

of all concerned with them that they should become man and wife. Poor Edith was subject to a feeling that everybody knew that she was expected to fall in love with the man. She thought it probable, too, that the man himself had been instructed to fall in love with her. This no doubt created a great difficulty for her, a difficulty which she felt to be heavy and inconvenient;—but it was lessened by the present condition of the household. When there is illness in a house, the feminine genius and spirit predominates the male. If the illness be so severe as to cause a sense of danger, this is so strongly the case that the natural position of the two is changed. Edith, quite unconscious of the reason, was much less afraid of her proposed lover than she would have been had there been no going about on tiptoe, no questions asked with bated breath, no great need for womanly aid.

Walter had been there four days, and was sitting with Edith one evening out on the lawn among the rhododendrons. When he had found what was the condition of the household, he had offered to go back at once to his regiment at Birmingham. But Sir Gregory would not hear to it. Sir Gregory hated the regiment, and had got an idea in his head that his nephew ought not to be there at all. He was too weak and diffident to do it himself; but if any one would have arranged it for him, he would have been glad to fix an income for Walter Marrable on condition that Walter should live at home, and look after the property, and be unto him as a son. But nothing had been fixed, nothing had been said, and on the day but one following, the captain was to return to Birmingham. Mrs. Brownlow was with her nephew, and Walter was sitting with Edith among the rhododendrons, the two

having come out of the house together after such a dinner as is served in a house of invalids. They had become very intimate, but Edith Brownlow had almost determined that Walter Marrable did not intend to fall in love with her. She had quite determined that she would not fall in love with him till he did. What she might do in that case she had not told herself. She was not quite sure. He was very nice,—but she was not quite sure. One ought to be very fond of a young man, she said to herself, before one falls in love with him. Nevertheless her mind was by no means set against him. If one can oblige one's friends one ought, she said, again to herself.

She had brought him out a cup of coffee, and he was sitting in a garden chair with a cigar in his mouth. They were Walter and Edith to each other, just as though they were cousins. Indeed, it was necessary that they should be cousins to each other, for the rest of their lives, if no more.

"Let us drop the Captain and the Miss," he had said himself; "the mischief is in it if you and I can't suppose ourselves to be related." She had assented cordially, and had called him Walter without a moment's hesitation. "Edith," he said to her now, after he had sat for a minute or two with the coffee in his hand; "did you ever hear of a certain cousin of ours, called Mary Lowther?"

"Oh, dear, yes; she lives with Aunt Sarah at Loring; only Aunt Sarah isn't my aunt, and Miss Lowther isn't my cousin."

"Just so. She lives at Loring. Edith, I love you so much that I wonder whether I may tell you the great secret of my life?"

"Of course you may. I love secrets; and I spe-

cially love the secrets of those who love me." She said this with a voice perfectly clear, and a face without a sign of disappointment; but her little dream had already been dissipated. She knew the secret as well as though it had been told.

"I was engaged to mary her."

"And you will marry her?"

"It was broken off,—when I thought that I should be forced to go to India. The story is very long, and very sad. It is my own father who has ruined me. But I will tell it you some day." Then he told it all, as he was sitting there with his cigar in his hand. Stories may seem to be very long, and yet be told very quickly.

"But you will go back to her now?" said Edith.

"She has not waited for me."

"What do you mean?"

"They tell me that she is to be married to a—to a—certain Mr. Gilmore."

"Already!"

"He had offered to her twenty times before I ever saw her. She never loved him, and does not now."

"Who has told you this, Captain Marrable?" She had not intended to alter her form of speech, and when she had done so would have given anything to have called him by his Christian name.

"My Uncle John."

"I would ask herself."

"I mean to do so. But somehow, treated as I am here, I am bound to tell my uncle of it first. And I cannot do that while Gregory is so ill."

"I must go up to my uncle now, Walter. And I do so hope she may be true to you. And I do so hope I may like her. Don't believe anything till she has told

you herself." Saying this, Edith Brownlow returned to the house, and at once put her dream quietly out of her sight. She said nothing to her mother about it then. It was not necessary that she should tell her mother as yet.

CHAPTER XXII

NEWS FROM DUNRIPPLE

At the end of the first week in August news reached the Vicarage at Bullhampton that was not indeed very important to the family of Mr. Fenwick, but which still seemed to have an immediate effect on their lives and comfort. The Vicar for some days past had been, as regarded himself, in a high good humour, in consequence of a communication which he had received from Lord St. George. Further mention of this communication must be made, but it may be deferred to the next chapter, as other matters, more momentous, require our immediate attention. Mr. Gilmore had pleaded very hard that a day might be fixed, and had almost succeeded. Mary Lowther, driven into a corner, had been able to give no reason why she should not fix a day, other than this,—that Mr. Gilmore had promised her that she should not be hurried. "What do you mean?" Mrs. Fenwick had said angrily. "You speak of the man who is to be your husband as though your greatest happiness in life were to keep away from him." Mary Lowther had not dared to answer that such would be her greatest happiness. Then news had reached the Vicarage of the illness of Gregory Marrable, and of Walter Marrable's presence at Dunripple. This had come of course from Aunt Sarah, at Loring; but it had come in such a manner as to seem to justify, for a time, Mary's silence in reference to that question of naming the day. The Marrables of Dunripple were

not nearly related to her. She had no personal remembrance of either Sir Gregory or his son. But there was an importance attached to the tidings, which, if analysed, would have been found to attach itself to Captain Marrable, rather than to the two men who were ill; and this was tacitly allowed to have an influence. Aunt Sarah had expressed her belief that Gregory Marrable was dying; and had gone on to say, —trusting to the known fact that Mary had engaged herself to Mr. Gilmore, and to the fact, as believed to be a fact, that Walter was engaged to Edith Brownlow, —had gone on to say that Captain Marrable would probably remain at Dunripple, and would take immediate charge of the estate. "I think there is no doubt," said Aunt Sarah, "that Captain Marrable and Edith Brownlow will be married." Mary was engaged to Mr. Gilmore, and why should not Aunt Sarah tell her news?

The Squire, who had become elated and happy at the period of the rubies, had, in three days, again fallen away into a state of angry gloom, rather than of melancholy. He said very little just now either to Fenwick or to Mrs. Fenwick about his marriage; and, indeed, he did not say very much to Mary herself. Men were already at work about the gardens at the Privets, and he would report to her what was done, and would tell her that the masons and painters would begin in a few days. Now and again he would ask for her company up to the place; and she had been there twice at his instance since the day on which she had gone after him of her own accord, and had fetched him down to look at the jewels. But there was little or no sympathy between them. Mary could not bring herself to care about the house or the gardens, though she told herself

again and again that there was she to live for the remainder of her life.

Two letters she received from her aunt at Loring within an interval of three days, and these letters were both filled with details as to the illness of Sir Gregory and his son, at Dunripple. Walter Marrable sent accounts to his uncle, the parson, and Mrs. Brownlow sent accounts to Miss Marrable herself. And then, on the day following the receipt of the last of these two letters, there came one from Walter Marrable himself addressed to Mary Lowther. Gregory Marrable was dead, and the letter announcing the death of the baronet's only son was as follows:—

"Dunripple, August 12, 1868.

"My Dear Mary,

"I hardly know whether you will have expected that the news which I have to tell you should reach you direct from me; but I think, upon the whole, that it is better that I should write. My cousin, Gregory Marrable, Sir Gregory's only son, died this morning. I do not doubt but that you know that he has been long ill. He has come to the end of all his troubles, and the old baronet is now childless. He also has been, and is still, unwell, though I do not know that he is much worse than usual. He has been an invalid for years and years. Of course he feels his son's death acutely; for he is a father who has ever been good to his son. But it always seems to me that old people become so used to death, that they do not think of it as do we who are younger. I have seen him twice to-day since the news was told to him, and though he spoke of his son with infinite sorrow, he was able to talk of other things.

"I write to you myself, especially, instead of getting one of the ladies here to do so, because I think it proper to tell you how things stand with myself. Everything is changed with me since you and I parted because it was necessary that I should seek my fortune in India. You already know that I have abandoned that idea; and I now find that I shall leave the army altogether. My uncle has wished it since I first came here, and he now proposes that I shall live here permanently. Of course the meaning is that I should assume the position of his heir. My father, with whom I personally will have no dealing in the matter, stands between us. But I do suppose that the family affairs will be so arranged that I may feel secure that I shall not be turned altogether adrift upon the world.

"Dear Mary,—I do not know how to tell you, that as regards my future everything now depends on you. They have told me that you have accepted an offer from Mr. Gilmore. I know no more than this,—that they have told me so. If you will tell me also that you mean to be his wife, I will say no more. But until you tell me so, I will not believe it. I do not think that you can ever love him as you certainly once loved me; —and when I think of it, how short a time ago that was! I know that I have no right to complain. Our separation was my doing as much as yours. But I will settle nothing as to my future life till I hear from yourself whether or no you will come back to me.

"I shall remain here till after the funeral, which will take place on Friday. On Monday I shall go back to Birmingham. This is Sunday, and I shall expect to hear from you before the week is over. If you bid me, I will be with you early next week. If you tell me that

my coming will be useless,—why, then, I shall care very little what happens.

"Yours, with all the love of my heart,

"WALTER MARRABLE."

Luckily for Mary she was alone when she read the letter. Her first idea on reading it was to think of the words which she had used when she had most ungraciously consented to become the wife of Harry Gilmore. "Were he so placed that he could afford to marry a poor wife, I should leave you and go to him." She remembered them accurately. She had made up her mind at the time that she would say them, thinking that thus he would be driven from her, and that she would be at rest from his solicitation, from those of her friends, and from the qualms of her own conscience. He had chosen to claim her in spite of those words,—and now the thing had happened to the possibility of which she had referred. Poor as she was, Walter Marrable was able to make her his wife. She held in her hand his letter telling her that it was so. All her heart was his,—as much now as it had ever been; and it was impossible that she should not go to him. She had told Mr. Gilmore herself that she could never love again as she loved Walter Marrable. She had been driven to believe that she could never be his wife, and she had separated herself from him. She had separated herself from him, and persuaded herself that it would be expedient for her to become the wife of this other man. But up to this very moment she had never been able to overcome the horror at the prospect. From day to day she had thought that she must give it up, even when they were dinning into her ears the tidings that Walter Marrable was to marry that girl

at Dunripple. But that had been a falsehood,—an absolute falsehood. There had been no such thought in his bosom. He had never been untrue to her. Ah! how much the nobler of the two had he been!

And yet she had struggled hard to do right,—to think of others more than of herself;—so to dispose of herself that she might be of some use in the world. And it had come to this! It was quite impossible now that she should marry Harry Gilmore. There had hitherto been at any rate an attempt on her part to reconcile herself to that marriage; but now the attempt was impossible. What right could she have to refuse the man she loved when he told her that all his happiness depended on her love! She could see it now. With all her desire to do right, she had done foul wrong in accepting Mr. Gilmore. She had done foul wrong, though she had complied with the advice of all her friends. It could not but have been wrong, as it had brought her to this,—her and him. But for the future, she might yet be right,—if she only knew how. That it would be wrong to marry Harry Gilmore,—to think of marrying him when her heart was so stirred by the letter which she held in her hand,—of that she was quite sure. She had done the man an injury for which she could never atone. Of that she was well aware. But the injury was done and could not now be undone. And had she not told him when he came to her, that she would even yet return to Walter Marrable if Walter Marrable were able to take her?

She went down stairs, slowly, just before the hour for the children's dinner, and found her friend, with one or two of the bairns, in the garden. "Janet," she said, "I have had a letter from Dunripple."

Mrs. Fenwick looked into her face, and saw that it was sad and sorrowful. "What news, Mary."

"My cousin, Gregory Marrable, is—no more; he died on Sunday morning." This was on the Tuesday.

"You expected it, I suppose, from your aunt's letter?"

"Oh, yes;—it has been sudden at last, it seems."

"And Sir Gregory?"

"He is pretty well. He is getting better."

"I pity him the loss of his son;—poor old man!" Mrs. Fenwick was far too clever not to see that the serious, solemn aspect of Mary's face was not due altogether to the death of a distant cousin, whom she herself did not even remember;—but she was too wise, also, to refer to what she presumed to be Mary's special grief at the moment. Mary was doubtless thinking of the altered circumstances of her Cousin Walter; but it was as well now that she should speak as little as possible about that cousin. Mrs. Fenwick could not turn altogether to another subject, but she would, if possible, divert her friend from her present thoughts. "Shall you go into mourning?" she asked; "he was only your second cousin; but people have ideas so different about those things."

"I do not know," said Mary, listlessly.

"If I were you, I would consult Mr. Gilmore. He has a right to be consulted. If you do, it should be very slight."

"I shall go into mourning," said Mary, suddenly, —remembering at the moment what was Walter's position in the household at Dunripple. Then the tears came up into her eyes, she knew not why; and she walked off by herself amidst the garden shrubs. Mrs. Fenwick watched her as she went, but could not quite

understand it. Those tears had not been for a second cousin who had never been known. And then, during the last few weeks, Mary, in regard to herself, had been prone to do anything that Mr. Gilmore would advise, as though she could make up by obedience for the want of that affection which she owed to him. Now, when she was told that she ought to consult Mr. Gilmore, she flatly refused to do so.

Mary came up the garden a few minutes afterwards, and as she passed towards the house, she begged to be excused from going into lunch that day. Lord St. George was coming up to lunch at the Vicarage, as will be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII

LORD ST. GEORGE IS VERY CUNNING

Lord St. George began to throw his oil upon the waters in reference to that unfortunate chapel at Bullhampton a day or two after his interview with his father in the lawyer's chambers. His father had found himself compelled to yield; had been driven, as it were, by the Fates, to accord to his son permission to do as his son should think best. There came to be so serious a trouble in consequence of that terrible mistake of Packer's, that the poor old Marquis was unable to defend himself from the necessity of yielding. On that day, before he left his son at Westminster, when their roads lay into the different council-chambers of the state, he had prayed hard that the oil might not be very oily.

But the son would not bate him an inch of his surrender.

"He is so utterly worthless," the Marquis had said, pleading hard as he spoke of his enemy.

"I am not quite sure, my lord, that you understand the man," St. George had said. "You hate him, and no doubt he hates you."

"Horrible!" ejaculated the Marquis.

"You intend to be as good as you know how to be to all those people at Bullhampton?"

"Indeed I do, St. George," said the Marquis, almost with tears in his eyes.

"And I shouldn't wonder if he did, too."

"But look at his life," said the Marquis.

"It isn't always easy to look at a man's life. We are always looking at men's lives, and always making mistakes. The Bishop thinks he is a good sort of fellow, and the Bishop isn't the man to like a debauched, unbelieving, reckless parson, who, according to your ideas, must be leading a life of open shame and profligacy. I'm inclined to think there must be a mistake."

The unfortunate Marquis groaned deeply as he walked away to the august chamber of the Lords.

These and such like are the troubles that sit heavy on a man's heart. If search for bread, and meat, and raiment, be set aside, then, beyond that, our happiness or misery here depends chiefly on success or failure in small things. Though a man when he turns into bed may be sure that he has unlimited thousands at his command, though all society be open to him, though he know himself to be esteemed handsome, clever, and fashionable, even though his digestion be good, and he have no doctor to deny him tobacco, champagne, or made dishes, still, if he be conscious of failure there where he has striven to succeed, even though it be in the humbling of an already humble adversary, he will stretch, and roll, and pine,—a wretched being. How happy is he who can get his fretting done for him by deputy!

Lord St. George wrote to the parson a few days after his interview with his father. He and Lord Trowbridge occupied the same house in London, and always met at breakfast; but nothing further was said between them during the remaining days in town upon the subject. Lord St. George wrote to the parson, and

his father had left London for Turnover before Mr. Fenwick's answer was received.

"My Dear Sir,"—(Lord St. George had said,)—"My father has put into my hands your letter about the dissenting chapel at Bullhampton. It seems to me, that he has made a mistake, and that you are very angry. Couldn't we arrange this little matter without fighting? There is not a landlord in England more desirous of doing good to his tenants than my father; and I am quite willing to believe that there is not an incumbent in England more desirous of doing good to his parishioners than you. I leave London for Wiltshire on Saturday the 11th. If you will meet me I will drive over to Bullhampton on Monday the 13th.

"Yours truly,

"St. George.

"No doubt you'll agree with me in thinking that internecine fighting in a parish between the landlord and the clergyman cannot be for the good of the people."

Thus it was that Lord St. George began to throw his oil upon the waters.

It may be doubted whether it should be ascribed to Mr. Fenwick as a weakness or a strength that, though he was very susceptible of anger, and though he could maintain his anger at glowing heat as long as fighting continued, it would all evaporate and leave him harmless as a dove at the first glimpse of an olive-branch. He knew this so well of himself, that it would sometimes be a regret to him in the culmination of his wrath that he would not be able to maintain it till the hour of his revenge should come. On receiving Lord

St. George's letter, he at once sat down and wrote to that nobleman, telling him that he would be happy to see him at lunch on the Monday at two o'clock. Then there came a rejoinder from Lord St. George, saying that he would be at the Vicarage at the hour named.

Mrs. Fenwick was of course there to entertain the nobleman, whom she had never seen before, and during the lunch very little was said about the chapel, and not a word was said about other causes of complaint.

"That is a terrible building, Mrs. Fenwick," Lord St. George had remarked.

"We're getting used to it now," Mrs. Fenwick had replied; "and Mr. Fenwick thinks it good for purposes of mortification."

"We must see and move the sackcloth and ashes a little further off," said his lordship.

Then they ate their lunch, and talked about the parish, and expressed a joint hope that the Grinder would be hung at Salisbury.

"Now let us go and see the *corpus delicti,*" said the Vicar as soon as they had drawn their chairs from the table.

The two men went out and walked round the chapel, and, finding it open, walked into it. Of course there were remarks made by both of them. It was acknowledged that it was ugly, misplaced, uncomfortable, detestable to the eye, and ear, and general feeling,—except in so far as it might suit the wants of people who were not sufficiently educated to enjoy the higher tone, and more elaborate language of the Church of England services. It was thus that they spoke to each other, quite in an æsthetic manner.

Lord St. George had said as he entered the chapel, that it must come down as a matter of course; and the Vicar had suggested that there need be no hurry.

"They tell me that it must be removed some day," said the Vicar, "but as I am not likely to leave the parish, nobody need start the matter for a year or two." Lord St. George was declaring that advantage could not be taken of such a concession on Mr. Fenwick's part, when a third person entered the building, and walked towards them with a quick step.

"Here is Mr. Puddleham, the minister," said Mr. Fenwick; and the future lord of Bullhampton was introduced to the present owner of the pulpit under which they were standing.

"My lord," said the minister, "I am proud, indeed, to have the honour of meeting your lordship in our new chapel, and of expressing to your lordship the high sense entertained by me and my congregation of your noble father's munificent liberality to us in the matter of the land."

In saying this Mr. Puddleham never once turned his face upon the Vicar. He presumed himself at that present moment to be at feud with the Vicar in most deadly degree. Though the Vicar would occasionally accost him in the village, he always answered the Vicar as though the two were enemies. He had bowed when he came up the chapel, but he had bowed to the stranger. If the Vicar took any of that courtesy to himself, that was not his fault.

"I'm afraid we were a little too quick there," said Lord St. George.

"I hope not, my lord; I hope not. I have heard a rumour; but I have inquired. I have inquired, and——"

"The truth is, Mr. Puddleham, that we are standing on Mr. Fenwick's private ground this moment."

"You are quite welcome to the use of it, Mr. Puddleham," said the Vicar. Mr. Puddleham assumed a look of dignity, and frowned. He could not even yet believe that his friend the Marquis had made so fatal a mistake.

"We must build you another chapel,—that will be about the long and short of it, Mr. Puddleham."

"My lord, I should think there must be some—mistake. Some error must have crept in somewhere, my lord. I have made inquiry——"

"It has been a very big error," said Lord St. George, "and it has crept into Mr. Fenwick's glebe in a very palpable form. There is no use in discussing it, Mr. Puddleham."

"And why didn't the reverend gentleman claim the ground when the works were commenced?" demanded the indignant minister, turning now for the first time to the Vicar, and doing so with a visage full of wrath, and a graceful uplifting of his right hand.

"The reverend gentleman was very ignorant of matters with which he ought to have been better acquainted," said Mr. Fenwick himself.

"Very ignorant, indeed," said Mr. Puddleham. "My lord, I am inclined to think that we can assert our right to this chapel and maintain it. My lord, I am of opinion that the whole hierarchy of the Episcopal Established Church in England cannot expel us. My lord, who will be the man to move the first brick from this sacred edifice?" And Mr. Puddleham pointed up to the pulpit as though he knew well where that brick was ever to be found when duty required its presence. "My lord, I would propose that nothing should be

done; and then let us see who will attempt to close this chapel door against the lambs of the Lord who come here for pasture in their need."

"The lambs shall have pasture and shall have their pastor," said St. George, laughing. "We'll move this chapel to ground that is our own, and make everything as right as a trivet for you. You don't want to intrude, I'm sure."

Mr. Puddleham's eloquence was by no means exhausted; but at last, when they had left the chapel, and the ground immediately around the chapel which Mr. Puddleham would insist upon regarding as his own, they did manage to shake him off.

"And now, Mr. Fenwick," said Lord St. George, in his determined purpose to throw oil upon the waters, "what is this unfortunate quarrel between you and my father?"

"You had better ask him that, my lord."

"I have asked him, of course—and of course he has no answer to make. No doubt you intended to enrage him when you wrote him that letter which he showed me."

"Certainly I did."

"I hardly see how good is to be done by angering an old man who stands high in the world's esteem."

"Had he not stood high, my lord, I should probably have passed him by."

"I can understand all that,—that one man should be a mark for another's scorn because he is a Marquis, and wealthy. But what I can't understand is, that such a one as you should think that good can come from it."

"Do you know what your father has said of me?"

"I've no doubt you both say very hard things of each other."

"I never said an evil thing of him behind his back that I have not said as strongly to his face," said Mr. Fenwick, with much of indignation in his tone.

"Do you really think that that mitigates the injury done to my father?" said Lord St. George.

"Do you know that he has complained of me to the Bishop?"

"Yes,—and the Bishop took your part."

"No thanks to your father, Lord St. George. Do you know that he has accused me publicly of the grossest vices; that he has,—that he has,—that he has——. There is nothing so bad that he hasn't said it of me."

"Upon my word, I think you are even with him, Mr. Fenwick;—I do indeed."

"What I have said, I have said to his face. I have made no accusation against him. Come, my lord, I am willing enough to let bygones be bygones. If Lord Trowbridge will condescend to say that he will drop all animosity to me, I will forgive him the injuries he has done me. But I cannot admit myself to have been wrong."

"I never knew any man who would," said Lord St. George.

"If the Marquis will put out his hand to me, I will accept it," said the Vicar.

"Allow me to do so on his behalf," said the son.

And thus the quarrel was presumed to be healed. Lord St. George went to the inn for his horse, and the Vicar, as he walked across to the Vicarage, felt that he had been—done. This young lord had been very clever,—and had treated the quarrel as though on even terms, as if the offences on each side had been equal.

And yet the Vicar knew very well that he had been right,—right without a single slip,—right from the beginning to the end. "He has been clever," he said to himself, "and he shall have the advantage of his cleverness." Then he resolved that as far as he was concerned the quarrel should in truth be over.

CHAPTER XXIV

MARY LOWTHER'S TREACHERY

WHILE the Vicar was listening to the eloquence of Mr. Puddleham in the chapel, and was being cozened out of his just indignation by Lord St. George, a terrible scene was going on in the drawing-room of the Vicarage. Mary Lowther, as the reader knows, had declared that she would wear mourning for her distant cousin, and had declined to appear at lunch before Lord St. George. Mrs. Fenwick, putting these things together, knew that much was the matter, but she did not know how much. She did not as yet anticipate the terrible state of things which was to be made known to her that afternoon.

Mary was quite aware that the thing must be settled. In the first place she must answer Captain Marrable's letter. And then it was her bounden duty to let Mr. Gilmore know her mind as soon as she knew it herself. It might be easy enough for her to write to Walter Marrable. That which she had to say to him would be pleasant enough in the saying. But that could not be said till the other thing should be unsaid. And how was that unsaying to be accomplished? Nothing could be done without the aid of Mrs. Fenwick; and now she was afraid of Mrs. Fenwick,—as the guilty are always afraid of those who will have to judge their guilt. While the children were at dinner, and while the lord was sitting at lunch, she remained up in her own room. From her window she could see the two

men walking across the Vicarage grounds towards the chapel, and she knew that her friend would be alone. Her story must be told to Mrs. Fenwick, and to Mrs. Fenwick only. It would be impossible for her to speak of her determination before the Vicar till he should have received a first notice of it from his wife. And there certainly must be no delay. The men were hardly out of sight before she had resolved to go down at once. She looked at herself in the glass, and spunged the mark of tears from her eyes, and smoothed her hair, and then descended. She never before had felt so much in fear of her friend; and yet it was her friend who was mainly the cause of this mischief which surrounded her, and who had persuaded her to evil. At Janet Fenwick's instance she had undertaken to marry a man whom she did not love; and yet she feared to go to Janet Fenwick with the story of her repentance. Why not indignantly demand of her friend assistance in extricating herself from the injury which that friend had brought upon her?

She found Mrs. Fenwick with the children in the little breakfast parlour to which they had been banished by the coming of Lord St. George. "Janet," she said, "come and take a turn with me in the garden." It was now the middle of August, and life at the Vicarage was spent almost as much out of doors as within. The ladies went about with parasols, and would carry their hats hanging in their hands. There was no delay, therefore, and the two were on the gravel-path almost as soon as Mary's request was made. "I did not show you my letter from Dunripple," she said, putting her hand into her pocket; "but I might as well do so now. You will have to read it."

She took out the document, but did not at once hand

it to her companion. "Is there anything wrong, Mary?" said Mrs. Fenwick.

"Wrong. Yes;—very, very wrong. Janet, it is no use your talking to me. I have quite made up my mind. I cannot and I will not marry Mr. Gilmore."

"Mary, this is insanity."

"You may say what you please, but I am determined. I cannot and I will not. Will you help me out of my difficulty?"

"Certainly not in the way you mean;—certainly not. It cannot be either for your good or for his. After what has passed, how on earth could you bring yourself to make such a proposition to him?"

"I do not know; that is what I feel the most. I do not know how I shall tell him. But he must be told. I thought that perhaps Mr. Fenwick would do it."

"I am quite sure he will do nothing of the kind. Think of it, Mary. How can you bring yourself to be so false to a man?"

"I have not been false to him. I have been false to myself, but never to him. I told him how it was. When you drove me on——"

"Drove you on, Mary?"

"I do not mean to be ungrateful, or to say hard things; but when you made me feel that if he were satisfied I also might put up with it, I told him that I could never love him. I told him that I did love, and ever should love, Walter Marrable. I told him that I had nothing—nothing—nothing to give him. But he would take no answer but the one; and I did—I did give it him. I know I did; and I have never had a moment of happiness since. And now has come this letter. Janet, do not be cruel to me. Do not speak to me as though everything must be stern and hard

and cruel." Then she handed up the letter, and Mrs. Fenwick read it as they walked.

"And is he to be made a tool, because the other man has changed his mind?" said Mrs. Fenwick.

"Walter has never changed his mind."

"His plans, then. It comes to the same thing. Do you know that you will have to answer for his life, or for his reason? Have you not learned yet to understand the constancy of his nature?"

"Is it my fault that he should be constant? I told him when he offered to me that if Walter were to come back to me and ask me again, I should go to him in spite of any promise that I had made. I said so as plain as I am saying this to you."

"I am quite sure that he did not understand it so."

"Janet, indeed he did."

"No man would have submitted himself to an engagement with such a condition. It is quite impossible. What! Mr. Gilmore knew when you took him that if this gentleman should choose to change his mind at any moment before you were actually married, you would walk off and go back to him!"

"I told him so, Janet. He will not deny that I told him so. When I told him so, I was sure that he would have declined such an engagement. But he did not, and I had no way of escape. Janet, if you could know what I have been suffering, you would not be cruel to me. Think what it would have been to you to have to marry a man you did not love, and to break the heart of one you did love. Of course Mr. Gilmore is your friend."

"He is our friend!"

"And, of course, you do not care for Captain Marrable?"

"I never even saw him."

"But you might put yourself in my place, and judge fairly between us. There has not been a thought or a feeling in my heart concealed from you since first all this began. You have known that I have never loved your friend."

"I know that, after full consideration, you have accepted him; and I know also, that he is a man who will devote his whole life to make you happy."

"It can never be. You may as well believe me. If you will not help me, nor Mr. Fenwick, I must tell him myself;—or I must write to him and leave the place suddenly. I know that I have behaved badly. I have tried to do right, but I have done wrong. When I came here I was very unhappy. How could I help being unhappy when I had lost all that I cared for in the world? Then you told me that I might at any rate be of some use to some one, by marrying your friend. You do not know how I strove to make myself fond of him! And then, at last, when the time came that I had to answer him, I thought that I would tell him everything. I thought that if I told him the truth he would see that we had better be apart. But when I told him, leaving him, as I imagined, no choice but to reject me,—he chose to take me. Well, Janet; at any rate, then, as I was taught to believe, there was no one to be ruined by this,—no one to be broken on the wheel,—but myself; and I thought that if I struggled, I might so do my duty that he might be satisfied. I see that I was wrong, but you should not rebuke me for it. I had tried to do as you bade me. But I did tell him that if ever this thing happened I should leave him. It has happened, and I must leave him." Mrs. Fenwick had let her speak on without

interrupting her, intending when she had finished, to say definitely, that they at the Vicarage could not make themselves parties to any treason towards Mr. Gilmore; but when Mary had come to the end of her story her friend's heart was softened towards her. She walked silently along the path, refraining at any rate from those bitter arguments with which she had at first thought to confound Mary in her treachery. "I do think you love me," said Mary.

"Indeed I love you."

"Then help me; do help me. I will go on my knees to him to beg his pardon."

"I do not know what to say to it. Begging his pardon will be of no avail. As for myself, I should not dare to tell him. We used to think, when he was hopeless before, that dwelling on it all would drive him to some absolute madness. And it will be worse now. Of course it will be worse."

"What am I to do?" Mary paused a moment, and then added, sharply,—"There is one thing I will not do; I will not go to the altar and become his wife."

"I suppose I had better tell Frank," said Mrs. Fenwick, after another pause.

This was, of course, what Mary Lowther desired, but she begged for and obtained permission not to see the Vicar herself that evening. She would keep her own room that night, and meet him the next morning before prayers as best she might.

When the Vicar came back to the house, his mind was so full of the chapel, and Lord St. George, and the admirable manner in which he had been cajoled out of his wrath without the slightest admission on the part of the lord that his father had ever been wrong,

—his thoughts were so occupied with all this, and with Mr. Puddleham's oratory, that he did not at first give his wife an opportunity of telling Mary Lowther's story.

"We shall all of us have to go over to Turnover next week," he said.

"You may go. I won't."

"And I shouldn't wonder if the Marquis were to offer me a better living, so that I might be close to him. We are to be the lamb and the wolf sitting down together."

"And which is to be the lamb?"

"That does not matter. But the worst of it is, Puddleham won't come and be a lamb too. Here am I, who have suffered pretty nearly as much as St. Paul, have forgiven all my enemies all round, and shaken hands with the Marquis by proxy, while Puddleham has been man enough to maintain the dignity of his indignation. The truth is, that the possession of a grievance is the one state of human blessedness. As long as the chapel was there, *malgré moi,* I could revel in my wrong. It turns out now that I can send poor Puddleham adrift to-morrow, and he immediately becomes the hero of the hour. I wish your brother-in-law had not been so officious in finding it all out."

Mrs. Fenwick postponed her story till the evening.

"Where is Mary?" Fenwick asked, when dinner was announced.

"She is not quite well, and will not come down. Wait awhile, and you shall be told." He did wait; but the moment that they were alone again he asked his question. Then Mrs. Fenwick told the whole story, hardly expressing an opinion herself as she told it. "I don't think she is to be shaken," she said at last.

"She is behaving very badly,—very badly,—very badly."

"I am not quite sure, Frank, whether we have behaved wisely," said his wife.

"If it must be told him, it will drive him mad," said Fenwick.

"I think it must be told."

"And I am to tell it?"

"That is what she asks."

"I can't say that I have made up my mind; but, as far as I can see at present, I will do nothing of the kind. She has no right to expect it."

Before they went to bed, however, he also had been somewhat softened. When his wife declared, with tears in her eyes, that she would never interfere at match-making again, he began to perceive that he also had endeavoured to be a match-maker and had failed.

CHAPTER XXV

UP AT THE PRIVETS

The whole of the next day was passed in wretchedness by the party at the Vicarage. The Vicar, as he greeted Miss Lowther in the morning, had not meant to be severe, having been specially cautioned against severity by his wife; but he had been unable not to be silent and stern. Not a word was spoken about Mr. Gilmore till after breakfast, and then it was no more than a word.

"I would think better of this, Mary," said the Vicar.

"I cannot think better of it," she replied.

He refused, however, to go to Mr. Gilmore that day, demanding that she should have another day in which to revolve the matter in her mind. It was understood, however, that if she persisted he would break the matter to her lover. Then this trouble was aggravated by the coming of Mr. Gilmore to the Vicarage, though it may be that the visit was of use by preparing him in some degree for the blow. When he came Mary was not to be seen. Fancying that he might call, she remained up-stairs all day, and Mrs. Fenwick was obliged to say that she was unwell. "Is she really ill?" the poor man had asked. Mrs. Fenwick, driven hard by the difficulty of her position, had said that she did not believe Mary to be very ill, but that she was so discomposed by news from Dunripple that she could not come down. "I should have thought that I might have seen her," said Mr. Gilmore, with that black frown

upon his brow which now they all knew so well. Mrs. Fenwick made no reply, and then the unhappy man went away. He wanted no further informant to tell him that the woman to whom he was pledged regarded her engagement to him with aversion.

"I must see her again before I go," Fenwick said to his wife the next morning. And he did see her. But Mary was absolutely firm. When he remarked that she was pale and worn and ill, she acknowledged that she had not closed her eyes during those two nights.

"And it must be so?" he asked, holding her hand tenderly.

"I am so grieved that you should have such a mission," she replied.

Then he explained to her that he was not thinking of himself, sad as the occasion would be to him. But if this great sorrow could have been spared to his friend! It could not, however, be spared. Mary was quite firm, at any rate as to that. No consideration should induce her now to marry Mr. Gilmore. Mr. Fenwick, on her behalf, might express his regret for the grief she had caused in any terms that he might think fit to use,—might humiliate her to the ground if he thought it proper. And yet, had not Mr. Gilmore sinned more against her than had she against him? Had not the manner in which he had grasped at her hand been unmanly and unworthy? But of this, though she thought much of it, she said nothing now to Mr. Fenwick. This commission to the Vicar was that he should make her free; and in doing this he might use what language, and make what confessions he pleased. He must, however, make her free.

After breakfast he started upon his errand with a very heavy heart. He loved his friend dearly. Between

these two there had grown up now during a period of many years, that undemonstrative, unexpressed, almost unconscious affection which, with men, will often make the greatest charm of their lives, but which is held by women to be quite unsatisfactory and almost nugatory. It may be doubted whether either of them had ever told the other of his regard. "Yours always," in writing, was the warmest term that was ever used. Neither ever dreamed of suggesting that the absence of the other would be a cause of grief or even of discomfort. They would bicker with each other, and not unfrequently abuse each other. Chance threw them much together, but they never did anything to assist chance. Women, who love each other as well, will always be expressing their love, always making plans to be together, always doing little things each for the gratification of the other, constantly making presents backwards and forwards. These two men had never given anything, one to the other, beyond a worn-out walking-stick, or a cigar. They were rough to each other, caustic, and almost ill-mannered. But they thoroughly trusted each other; and the happiness, prosperity, and, above all, the honour of the one were, to the other, matters of keenest moment. The bigger man of the two, the one who felt rather than knew himself to be the bigger, had to say that which would go nigh to break his friend's heart, and the task which he had in hand made him sick at his own heart. He walked slowly across the fields, turning over in his own mind the words he would use. His misery for his friend was infinitely greater than any that he had suffered on his own account, either in regard to Mr. Puddleham's chapel or the calumny of the Marquis.

He found Gilmore sauntering about the stable yard.

"Old fellow," he said, "come along, I have got something to say to you."

"It is about Mary, I suppose?"

"Well, yes; it is about Mary. You mustn't be a woman, Harry, or let a woman make you seriously wretched."

"I know it all. That will do. You need not say anything more." Then he put his hands into the pockets of his shooting coat, and walked off as though all had been said that was necessary. Fenwick had told his message and might now go away. As for himself, in the sharpness of his agony he had as yet made no scheme for a future purpose. Only this he had determined. He would see that false woman once again, and tell her what he thought of her conduct.

But Fenwick knew that his task was not yet done. Gilmore might walk off, but he was bound to follow the unhappy man.

"Harry," he said, "you had better let me come with you for awhile. You had better hear what I have to say."

"I want to hear nothing more. What good can it be? Like a fool, I had set my fortune on one cast of the die, and I have lost it. Why she should have added on the misery and disgrace of the last few weeks to the rest, I cannot imagine. I suppose it has been her way of punishing me for my persistency."

"It has not been that, Harry."

"God knows what it has been. I do not understand it."

He had turned from the stables towards the house, and had now come to a part of the grounds in which workmen were converting a little paddock in front of the house into a garden. The gardener was

there with four or five labourers, and planks, and barrows, and mattocks, and heaps of undistributed earth and gravel were spread about. "Give over with this," he said to the gardener, angrily. The man touched his hat, and stood amazed. "Leave it, I say, and send these men away. Pay them for the work, and let them go."

"You don't mean as we are to leave it all like this, sir?"

"I do mean that you are to leave it just as it is." There was a man standing with a shovel in his hand, levelling some loose earth, and the Squire, going up to him, took the shovel from him and threw it upon the ground. "When I say a thing, I mean it. Ambrose, take these men away. I will not have another stroke of work done here." The Vicar came up to him and whispered in his ear a prayer that he would not expose himself before the men; but the Squire cared nothing for his friend's whisper. He shook off the Vicar's hand from his arm and stalked away into the house.

Two rooms, the two drawing-rooms as they were called, on the ground floor had been stripped of the old paper, and were now in that state of apparent ruin which always comes upon such rooms when workmen enter them with their tools. There were tressels with a board across them, on which a man was standing at this moment, whose business it was to decorate the ceiling.

"That will do," said the Squire. "You may get down and leave the place." The man stood still on his board, with his eyes open and his brush in his hand. "I have changed my mind, and you may come down," said Mr. Gilmore. "Tell Mr. Cross to send me his

bill for what he has done, and it shall be paid. Come down, when I tell you. I will have nothing further touched in the house." He went from room to room and gave the same orders, and, after awhile, succeeded in turning the paperhangers and painters out of the house. Fenwick had followed him from room to room, making every now and then an attempt at remonstrance; but the Squire had paid no attention, either to his words or to his presence.

At last they were alone together in Gilmore's own study or office, and then the Vicar spoke. "Harry," he said, "I am, indeed, surprised that such a one as you should not have more manhood at his command."

"Were you ever tried as I am?"

"What matters that? You are responsible for your own conduct, and I tell you that your conduct is unmanly."

"Why should I have the rooms done up? I shall never live here. What is it to me how they are left? The sooner I stop a useless expenditure the better. It was being done for her, not for me."

"Of course you will live here."

"You know nothing about it. You cannot know anything about it. Why has she treated me in this way? To send up to a man and simply tell him that she has changed her mind! God in heaven!—that you should bring me such a message!"

"You have not allowed me to give my message yet."

"Give it me, then, and have done with it. Has she not sent you to tell me that she has changed her mind?"

Now that opportunity was given to him, the Vicar did not know how to tell his message. "Perhaps it

would have been better that Janet should have come to you."

"It don't make much difference who comes. She'll never come again. I don't suppose, Frank, you can understand the sort of love I have had for her. You have never been driven by failure to such longing as mine has been. And then I thought it had come at last!"

"Will you be patient while I speak to you, Harry?" said the Vicar, again taking him by the arm. They had now left the house, and were out alone among the shrubs.

"Patient! Yes; I think I am patient. Nothing further can hurt me now;—that's one comfort."

"Mary bids me remind you,"—Gilmore shuddered and shook himself when Mary Lowther's name was mentioned, but he did not attempt to stop the Vicar,—"she bids me remind you that when the other day she consented to be your wife, she did so——." He tried to tell it all, but he could not. How could he tell the man the story which Mary had told to him?

"I understand," said Gilmore. "It's all of no use, and you are troubling yourself for nothing. She told me that she did not care a straw for me;—but she accepted me."

"If that was the case, you were both wrong."

"It was the case. I don't say who was wrong, but the punishment has come upon me only. Look here, Frank; I will not take this message from you. I will not even give her up yet. I have a right, at least, to see her, and see her I will. I don't suppose you will try to prevent me?"

"She must do as she pleases, Harry, as long as she is in my house."

"She shall see me. She is self-willed enough, but she shall not refuse me that. Be so good as to tell her, with my compliments, that I expect her to see me. A man is not going to be treated like this, and then not speak his own mind. Be good enough to tell her that from me. I demand an interview." So saying, he turned upon his heel, and walked quickly away through the shrubbery.

The Vicar stood for awhile to think, and then slowly returned to the Vicarage by himself. What Gilmore had said to him was true enough. He had, indeed, never been tried after that fashion. It did seem to him that his friend was in fact broken-hearted. Harry Gilmore might live on,—as is the way with men and women who are broken-hearted;—but life for the present, life for some years to come, could be to him only a burden.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MILLER TELLS HIS TROUBLES

WHEN the Vicar went on his unhappy mission to the Squire's house, Carry Brattle had been nearly two months at the mill. During that time both Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick had seen her more than once, and at last she had been persuaded to go to church with her sister. On the previous Sunday she had crept through the village at Fanny's side, and had taken a place provided for her in the dark corner of a dark pew under the protection of a thick veil. Fanny walked with her boldly across the village street, as though she were not in any slightest degree ashamed of her companion, and sat by her side, and then conveyed her home. On the next Sunday the sacrament would be given, and this was done in preparation for that day.

Things had not gone very pleasantly at the mill. Up to this moment old Brattle had expressed no forgiveness towards his daughter, had uttered no word of affection to her, had made no sign that he had again taken her to his bosom as his own child. He had spoken to her, because in the narrow confines of their home it was almost impossible that he should live in the house with her without doing so. Carry had gradually fallen into the way of doing her share of the daily work. She cooked, and baked, and strove hard that her presence in the house should be found to be a comfort. She was useful, and the very fact of her utility brought her father into a certain state of com-

munion with her; but he never addressed her specially, never called her by her name, and had not yet even acknowledged to his wife or to Fanny that he recognised her as one of the family. They had chosen to bring her in against his will, and he would not turn their guest from the door. It was thus that he seemed to regard his daughter's presence in the mill-house.

Under this treatment Carry was becoming restive and impatient. On such an occasion as that of going to church and exposing herself to the eyes of those who had known her as an innocent, laughing, saucy girl, she could not but be humble, quiet, and awe-struck; but at home she was beginning again gradually to assert her own character. "If father won't speak to me, I'd better go," she said to Fanny.

"And where will you go to, Carry?"

"I dun' know;—into the mill-pond would be best for them as belongs to me. I suppose there ain't anybody as 'd have me?"

"Nobody can have you as will love you as we do, Carry."

"Why won't father come round and speak to me? You can't tell what it is to have him looking at one that way. I sometimes feels like getting up and telling him to turn me out if he won't speak a word to me." But Fanny had softened her, and encouraged her, bidding her wait still again, explaining the sorrow that weighed upon their father's heart as well as she could without saying a single cruel word as to Carry's past life. Fanny's task was not easy, and it was made the harder by their mother's special tenderness towards Carry. "The less she says and the more she does, the better for her," said Fanny to her mother. "You shouldn't let her talk about father." Mrs. Brattle did

not attempt to argue the matter with her elder daughter, but she found it to be quite out of her power to restrain Carry's talking.

During these two months old Brattle had not even seen either his landlord or the Vicar. They had both been at the mill, but the miller had kept himself up among his grist, and had not condescended to come down to them. Nor had he even, since Carry's return, been seen in Bullhampton, or even up on the high road leading to it. He held no communion with men other than was absolutely necessary for his business, feeling himself to be degraded, not so much by his daughter's fall as by his concession to his fallen daughter. He would sit out in the porch of an evening, and smoke his pipe; but if he heard a footstep on the lane he would retreat, and cross the plank and get among the wheels of his mill, or out into the orchard. Of Sam nothing had been heard. He was away, it was believed, in Durham, working at some colliery engine. He gave no sign of himself to his mother or sister; but it was understood that he would appear at the assizes, towards the end of the present month, as he had been summoned there as a witness at the trial of the two men for the murder of Mr. Trumbull.

And Carry, also, was to be a witness at the assizes; and, as it was believed, a witness much more material than her brother. Indeed, it was beginning to be thought that after all Sam would have no evidence to give. If, indeed, he had had nothing to do with the murder, it was not probable that any of the circumstances of the murder would have been confided to him. He had, it seems, been on intimate terms with the man Acorn,—and, through Acorn, had known Burrows and the old woman who lived at Pycroft Common,

the mother of Burrows. He had been in their company when they first visited Bullhampton, and had, as we know, invited them into the Vicar's garden,—much to the damage of Mr. Burrows' shoulder-blade; but it was believed that beyond this he could say nothing as to the murder. But Carry Brattle was presumed to have a closer knowledge of at least one of the men. She had now confessed to her sister that, after leaving Bullhampton, she had consented to become Acorn's wife. She had known then but little of his mode of life or past history; but he was young, good-looking, fairly well-dressed, and had promised to marry her. By him she was taken to the cottage on Pycroft Common, and by him she had certainly been visited on the morning after the murder. He had visited her and given her money;—and since that, according to her own story, she had neither seen him nor heard from him. She had never cared for him, she told her sister; but what was that to one such as her as long as he would make her an honest woman? All this was repeated by Fanny Brattle to Mrs. Fenwick;—and now the assizes were at hand, and how was Carry to demean herself there? Who would take her? Who would stand near her and support her, and save her from falling into that abyss of self-abasement and almost of self-annihilation which would be her doom, unless there were some one there to give her strength and aid?

"I would not go to Salisbury at all during the assizes, if I were you," Mrs. Fenwick had said to her husband. The Vicar understood thoroughly what was meant. Because of the evil things which had been said of him by that stupid old Marquis whom he had been cheated into forgiving, he was not to be allowed

to give a helping hand to his parishioner! Nevertheless, he acknowledged his wife's wisdom,—tacitly, as is fitting when such acknowledgments have to be made; and he contented himself with endeavouring to find for her some other escort. It had been hoped from day to day that the miller would yield, that he would embrace poor Carry, and promise her that she should again be to him as a daughter. If this could be brought about, then,—so thought the Vicar and Fanny, too,—the old man would steel himself to bear the eyes of the whole county, and would accompany the girl himself. But now the day was coming on, and Brattle seemed to be as far from yielding as ever. Fanny had dropped a word or two in his hearing about the assizes, but he had only glowered at her, taking no other notice whatever of her hints.

When the Vicar left his friend Gilmore, as has been told in the last chapter, he did not return to the Vicarage across the fields, but took the carriage road down to the lodge, and from thence crossed the stile that led into the path down to the mill. This was on the 15th of August, a Wednesday, and Carry was summoned to be at Salisbury on that day week. As the day drew near, she became very nervous. At the Vicar's instance Fanny had written to her brother George, asking him whether he would be good to his poor sister, and take her under his charge. He had written back,—or rather his wife had written for him,—sending Carry a note for £20 as a present, but declining, on the score of his own children, to be seen with her in Salisbury on the occasion. "I shall go with her myself, Mr. Fenwick," Fanny had said to the Vicar; "it'll just be better than nobody at all to be along with her." The Vicar was now going down to the

mill to give his assent to this. He could see nothing better. Fanny at any rate would be firm; would not be prevented by false shame from being a very sister to her sister; and would perhaps be admitted where a brother's attendance might be refused. He had promised to see the women at the mill as early in the week as he could, and now he went thither intent on giving them advice as to their proceedings at Salisbury. It would doubtless be necessary that they should sleep there, and he hoped that they might be accommodated by Mrs. Stiggs.

As he stepped out from the field path on to the lane, almost immediately in front of the mill, he came directly upon the miller. It was between twelve and one o'clock, and old Brattle was wandering about for a minute or two, waiting for his dinner. The two men met so that it was impossible that they should not speak; and on this occasion the miller did not seem to avoid his visitor. "Muster Fenwick," said he, as he took the Vicar's hand, "I'm bound to say as I'm much obliged to ye for all y' have done for that poor lass in there."

"Don't say a word about that, Mr. Brattle."

"But I must say a word. There's money owing, as I knows. There was ten shillings a week for her keep all that time she was at Salsbry yonder."

"I will not hear a word as to any money."

"Her brother George has sent her a gift, Muster Fenwick,—twenty pound."

"I am very glad to hear it."

"George is a well-to-do man, they tell me," continued the father, "and can afford to part with his money. But he won't come forward to help the girl any other gait. I'll thank you just to take what's due,

Muster Fenwick, and you can give her sister the change. Our Fanny has got the note as George sent."

Then there was a dispute about the money, as a matter of course. Fenwick swore that nothing was due, and the miller protested that as the money was there, all his daughter's expenses at Salisbury should be repaid. And the miller at last got the best of it. Fenwick promised that he would look to his book, see how much he had paid, and mention the sum to Fanny at some future time. He positively refused to take the note at present, protesting that he had no change, and that he would not burden himself with the responsibility of carrying so much money about with him in his pocket. Then he asked whether, if he went into the house, he would be able to say a word or two to the women before dinner. He had made up his mind that he would make no further attempt at reconciling the father to his daughter. He had often declared to his wife that there could be nothing so hateful to a man as the constant interference of a self-constituted adviser.

"I so often feel that I am making myself odious when I am telling them to do this or that; and then I ask myself what I should say if anybody were to come and advise me how to manage you and the bairns." And he had told his wife more than once how very natural and reasonable had been the expression of the lady's wrath at Startup, when he had taken upon himself to give her advice. "People know what is good for them to do, well enough, without being dictated to by a clergyman!" He had repeated the words to himself and to his wife a dozen times, and talked of having them put up in big red letters over the fire-place in his own study. He had there-

fore quite determined to say never another word to old Brattle in reference to his daughter Carry. But now the miller himself began upon the subject.

"You can see 'em, Muster Fenwick, in course. It don't make no odds about dinner. But I was wanting just to say a word to you about that poor young ooman there." This he said in a slow, half-hesitating voice, as though he could hardly bring himself to speak of the unfortunate one to whom he alluded. The Vicar muttered some word of assent, and then the miller went on. "You knows, of course, as how she be back here at the mill?"

"Certainly I do. I've seen her more than once."

"Muster Fenwick, I don't suppose as any one as 'asn't tried it knows what it is. I hopes you mayn't never know it; nor it ain't likely. Muster Fenwick, I'd sooner see her dead body stretched afore me,—and I loved her a'most as well as any father ever loved his da'ter,—I'd sooner 'a' see'd her brought home to the door stiff and stark than know her to be the thing she is." His hesitation had now given way to emphasis, and he raised his hand as he spoke. The Vicar caught it and held it in his own, and strove to find some word to say as the old man paused in his speech. But to Jacob Brattle it was hard for a clergyman to find any word to say on such an occasion. Of what use could it be to preach of repentance to one who believed nothing; or to tell of the opportunity which forgiveness by an earthly parent might afford to the sinner of obtaining lasting forgiveness elsewhere? But let him have said what he might, the miller would not have listened. He was full of that which lay upon his own heart. "If they only know'd what them as cares for 'em 'd has to bear, maybe they'd think a

little. But it ain't natural they should know, Muster Fenwick, and one's a'most tempted to say that a man 'd better have no child at all."

"Think of your son George, Mr. Brattle, and of Mrs. Jay."

"What's them to me? He sends the girl a twenty-pun'-note, and I wish he'd 'a' kep' it. As for t'other, she wouldn't let the girl inside her door! It's here she has to come."

"What comfort would you have, Mr. Brattle, without Fanny?"

"Fanny! I'm not saying nothing against Fanny. Not but what she hadn't no business to let the girl into the house in the middle of the night without saying a word to me."

"Would you have had her leave her sister outside in the cold and damp all night?"

"Why didn't she come an' ax? All the same, I ain't saying now't again Fanny. But, Muster Fenwick, if you ever come to have one foot bad o' the gout, it won't make you right to know that the other ain't got it. Y'll have the pain a-gnawing of you from the bad foot till you clean forget all the rest o' your body. It's so with me, I knows."

"What can I say to you, Mr. Brattle? I do feel for you. I do,—I do."

"Not a doubt on it, Muster Fenwick. They all on 'em feels for me. They all on 'em knows as how I'm bruised and mangled a'most as though I'd fallen through into that water-wheel. There ain't one in all Bull'ompton as don't know as Jacob Brattle is a broken man along of his da'ter that is a——"

"Silence, Mr. Brattle. You shall not say it. She is not that;—at any rate not now. Have you no knowl-

edge that sin may be left behind and deserted as well as virtue?"

"It ain't easy to leave disgrace behind, any ways. For ought I knows a girl may be made right arter a while; but as for her father, nothing 'll ever make him right again. It's in here, Muster Fenwick,—in here. There's things as is hard on us; but when they comes one can't send 'em away just because they is hardest of all to bear. I'd put up with aught, only this, and defied all Bull'ompton to say as it broke me;—but I'm about broke now. If I hadn't more nor a crust at home, nor a decent coat to my back, I'd 'a' looked 'em all square in the face as ever I did. But I can't look no man square in the face now;—and as for other folk's girls, I can't bear 'em near me,—no how. They makes me think of my own." Fenwick had now turned his back to the miller, in order that he might wipe away his tears without showing them. "I'm thinking of her always, Muster Fenwick;—day and night. When the mill's agoing, it's all the same. It's just as though there warn't nothing else in the whole world as I minded to think on. I've been a man all my life, Muster Fenwick; and now I ain't a man no more."

Our friend the Vicar never before felt himself so utterly unable to administer comfort in affliction. There was nothing on which he could take hold. He could tell the man, no doubt, that beyond all this there might be everlasting joy, not only for him, but for him and the girl together;—joy which would be sullied by no touch of disgrace. But there was a stubborn strength in the infidelity of this old Pagan which was utterly impervious to any adjuration on that side. That which he saw and knew and felt, he would believe; but he would believe nothing else. He knew now that he

was wounded and sore and wretched, and he understood the cause. He knew that he must bear his misery to the last, and he struggled to make his back broad for the load. But even the desire for ease, which is natural to all men, would not make him flinch in his infidelity. As he would not believe when things went well with him, and when the comfort of hope for the future was not imperatively needed for his daily solace,—so would he not believe now, when his need for such comfort was so pressing.

The upshot of it all was, that the miller thought that he would take his own daughter into Salisbury, and was desirous of breaking the matter in this way to the friend of his family. The Vicar, of course, applauded him much. Indeed, he applauded too much; —for the miller turned on him and declared that he was by no means certain that he was doing right. And when the Vicar asked him to be gentle with the girl, he turned upon him again.

"Why ain't she been gentle along of me? I hates such gentility, Muster Fenwick. I'll be honest with her, any way." But he thought better of it before he let the Vicar go. "I shan't do her no hurt, Muster Fenwick. Bad as she's been, she's my own flesh and blood still."

After what he had heard, Mr. Fenwick declined going into the mill-house, and returned home without seeing Mrs. Brattle and her daughters. The miller's determination should be told by himself; and the Vicar felt that he could hardly keep the secret were he now to see the women.

CHAPTER XXVII

IF I WERE YOUR SISTER!

Mr. Gilmore, in his last words to his friend Fenwick, declared that he would not accept the message which the Vicar delivered to him as the sufficient expression of Mary's decision. He would see Mary Lowther herself, and force her to confess her own treachery face to face with him,—to confess it or else to deny it. So much she could not refuse to grant him. Fenwick had indeed said that as long as the young lady was his guest she must be allowed to please herself as to whom she would see or not see. Gilmore should not be encouraged to force himself upon her at the Vicarage. But the Squire was quite sure that so much as that must be granted to him. It was impossible that even Mary Lowther should refuse to see him after what had passed between them. And then, as he walked about his own fields, thinking of it all, he allowed himself to feel a certain amount of hope that after all she might be made to marry him. His love for her had not dwindled,—or rather his desire to call her his own, and to make her his wife; but it had taken an altered form out of which all its native tenderness had been pressed by the usage to which he had been subjected. It was his honour rather than his love that he now desired to satisfy. All those who knew him best were aware that he had set his heart upon this marriage, and it was necessary to him that he should show them that he was not to be disappointed. Mary's conduct

to him from the day on which she had first engaged herself to him had been of such a kind as naturally to mar his tenderness and to banish from him all those prettinesses of courtship in which he would have indulged as pleasantly as any other man. She had told him in so many words that she intended to marry him without loving him, and on these terms he had accepted her. But in doing so he had unconsciously flattered himself that she would be better than her words,—that as she submitted herself to him as his affianced bride she would gradually become soft and loving in his hands. She had, if possible, been harder to him even than her words. She had made him understand thoroughly that his presence was not a joy to her, and that her engagement to him was a burden on her which she had taken on her shoulders simply because the romance of her life had been nipped in the bud in reference to the man whom she did love. Still he had persevered. He had set his heart sturdily on marrying this girl, and marry her he would, if, after any fashion, such marriage should come within his power. Mrs. Fenwick, by whose judgment and affection he had been swayed through all this matter, had told him again and again that such a girl as Mary Lowther must love her husband,—if her husband loved her and treated her with tenderness. "I think I can answer for myself," Gilmore had once replied, and his friend had thoroughly believed in him. Trusting to the assurance, he had persevered; he had persevered even when his trust in that assurance had been weakened by the girl's hardness. Anything would be better than breaking from an engagement on which he had so long rested all his hopes of happiness. She was pledged to be his wife; and, that being so, he could reform his

gardens and decorate his house, and employ himself about his place with some amount of satisfaction. He had at least a purpose in his life. Then by degrees there grew upon him a fear that she still meant to escape from him, and he swore to himself,—without any tenderness,—that this should not be so. Let her once be his wife, and she should be treated with all consideration,—with all affection, if she would accept it; but she should not make a fool of him now. Then the Vicar had come with his message, and he had been simply told that the engagement between them was over!

Of course he would see her,—and that at once. As soon as Fenwick had left him, he went with rapid steps over his whole place, and set the men again upon their work. This took place on a Wednesday, and the men should be continued at their work, at any rate, till Saturday. He explained this clearly to Ambrose, his gardener, and to the foreman in the house.

"It may be," said he to Ambrose, "that I shall change my mind altogether about the place;—but as I am still in doubt, let everything go on till Saturday."

Of course they all knew why it was that the conduct of the Squire was so like the conduct of a madman.

He sent down a note to Mary Lowther that evening.

"Dear Mary,

"I have seen Fenwick, and of course I must see you. Will you name an hour for to-morrow morning?

"Yours, H. G."

When Mary read this, which she did as they were sitting on the lawn after dinner, she did not hesitate for a moment. Hardly a word had been said to her

by Fenwick, or his wife, since his return from the Privets. They did not wish to show themselves to be angry with her, but they found conversation to be almost impossible. "You have told him?" Mary had asked. "Yes, I have told him," the Vicar had replied; and that had been nearly all. In the course of the afternoon she had hinted to Janet Fenwick that she thought she had better leave Bullhampton. "Not quite yet, dear," Mrs. Fenwick had said, and Mary had been afraid to urge her request.

"Shall I name eleven to-morrow?" she said, as she handed the Squire's note to Mrs. Fenwick. Mrs. Fenwick and the Vicar both assented, and then she went in and wrote her answer.

"I will be at home at the Vicarage at eleven.—M. L."

She would have given much to escape what was coming, but she had not expected to escape it.

The next morning after breakfast Fenwick himself went away. "I've had more than enough of it," he said, to his wife, "and I won't be near them."

Mrs. Fenwick was with her friend up to the moment at which the bell was heard at the front door. There was no coming up across the lawn now.

"Dear Janet," Mary said, when they were alone, "how I wish that I had never come to trouble you here at the Vicarage!"

Mrs. Fenwick was not without a feeling that much of all this unhappiness had come from her own persistency on behalf of her husband's friend, and thought that some expression was due from her to Mary to that effect. "You are not to suppose that we are

angry with you," she said, putting her arm round Mary's waist.

"Pray,—pray do not be angry with me."

"The fault has been too much ours for that. We should have left this alone, and not have pressed it. We have meant it for the best, dear."

"And I have meant to do right;—but, Janet, it is so hard to do right."

When the ring at the door was heard, Mrs. Fenwick met Harry Gilmore in the hall, and told him that he would find Mary in the drawing-room. She pressed his hand warmly as she looked into his face, but he spoke no word as he passed on to the room which she had just left. Mary was standing in the middle of the floor, half-way between the window and the door, to receive him. When she heard the door-bell, she put her hand to her heart, and there she held it till he was approaching; but then she dropped it and stood without support, with her face upraised to meet him. He came up to her very quickly and took her by the hand. "Mary," he said, "I am not to believe this message that has been sent to me. I do not believe it. I will not believe it. I will not accept it. It is out of the question;—quite out of the question. It shall be withdrawn, and nothing more shall be said about it."

"That cannot be, Mr. Gilmore."

"What cannot be? I say that it must be. You cannot deny, Mary, that you are betrothed to me as my wife. Are such betrothals to be nothing? Are promises to go for nothing because there has been no ceremony? You might as well come and tell me that you would leave me even though you were my wife."

"But I am not your wife."

"What does it mean? Have I not been patient with

you? Have I been hard to you, or cruel? Have you heard anything of me that is to my discredit?" She shook her head, eagerly. "Then what does it mean? Are you aware that you are proposing to yourself to make an utter wreck of me—to send me adrift upon the world without a purpose or a hope? What have I done to deserve such treatment?"

He pleaded his cause very well,—better than she had ever heard him plead a cause before. He held her still by the hand, not with a grasp of love, but with a retention which implied his will that she should not pass away from out of his power. He looked her full in the face, and she did not quail before his eyes. Nevertheless she would have given the world to have been elsewhere, and to have been free from the necessity of answering him. She had been fortifying herself throughout the morning with self-expressed protests that on no account would she yield, whether she had been right before or wrong;—of this she was convinced, that she must be right now to save herself from a marriage that was so distasteful to her.

"You have deserved nothing but good at my hands," she said.

"And is this good that you are doing to me?"

"Yes,—certainly. It is the best that I know how to do now."

"Why is it to be done now? What is it that has changed you?"

She withdrew her hand from him, and waited a while before she answered. It was necessary that she should tell him all the tidings that had been conveyed to her in the letter which she had received from her cousin Walter; but in order that he should perfectly understand them and be made to know their force upon

herself, she must remind him of the stipulation which she had made when she consented to her engagement. But how could she speak words which would seem to him to be spoken only to remind him of the abjectness of his submission to her?

"I was broken-hearted when I came here," she said.

"And therefore you would leave me broken-hearted now."

"You should spare me, Mr. Gilmore. You remember what I told you. I loved my cousin Walter entirely. I did not hide it from you. I begged you to leave me because it was so. I told you that my heart would not change. When I said so, I thought that you would—desist."

"I am to be punished, then, for having been too true to you?"

"I will not defend myself for accepting you at last. But you must remember that when I did so, I said that I should go—back—to him, if he could take me."

"And you are going back to him?"

"If he will have me."

"You can stand there and look me in the face and tell me that you are false as that! You can confess to me that you will change like a weather-cock;—be his one day, and then mine, and his again the next! You can own that you give yourself about first to one man, and then to another, just as may suit you at the moment! I would not have believed it of any woman. When you tell it me of yourself, I begin to think that I have been wrong all through in my ideas of a woman's character."

The time had now come in which she must indeed

speak up. And speech seemed to be easier with her now that he had allowed himself to express his anger. He had expressed more than his anger. He had dared to shower his scorn upon her, and the pelting of the storm gave her courage. "You are unjust upon me, Mr. Gilmore,—unjust and cruel. You know in your heart that I have not changed."

"Were you not betrothed to me?"

"I was;—but in what way? Have I told you any untruth? Have I concealed anything? When I accepted you, did I not explain to you how and why it was so,—against my own wish, against my own judgment,—because then I had ceased to care what became of me? I do care now. I care very much."

"And you think that is justice to me?"

"If you will bandy accusations with me, why did you accept me when I told you that I could not love you? But, indeed, indeed, I would not say a word to displease you, if you would only spare me. We were both wrong; but the wrong must now be put right. You would not wish to take me for your wife when I tell you that my heart is full of affection for another man. Then, when I yielded, I was struggling to cure that as a great evil. Now I welcome it as the sweetest blessing of my life. If I were your sister, what would you have me do?"

He stood silent for a moment, and then the colour rose to his forehead as he answered her. "If you were my sister, my ears would tingle with shame when your name was mentioned in my presence."

The blood rushed also over her face, suffusing her whole countenance, forehead and all, and fire flashed from her eyes, and her lips were parted, and even her nostrils seemed to swell with anger. She looked full

into his face for a second, and then she turned and walked speechless away from him. When the handle of the door was in her hand, she turned again to address him. "Mr. Gilmore," she said, "I will never willingly speak to you again." Then the door was opened and closed behind her before a word had escaped from his lips.

He knew that he had insulted her. He knew that he had uttered words so hard, that it might be doubted whether, under any circumstances, they could be justified from a gentleman to a lady. And certainly he had not intended to insult her as he was coming down to the Vicarage. As far as any settled purpose had been formed in his mind, he had meant to force her back to her engagement with himself, by showing to her how manifest would be her injustice, and how great her treachery, if she persisted in leaving him. But he knew her character well enough to be aware that any word of insult addressed to her as a woman would create offence which she herself would be unable to quell. But his anger had got the better of his judgment, and when the suggestion was made to him of a sister of his own, he took the opportunity which was offered to him of hitting her with all his force. She had felt the blow, and had determined that she would never encounter another.

He was left alone, and he must retreat. He waited a while, thinking that perhaps Mrs. Fenwick or the Vicar would come to him; but nobody came. The window of the room was open, and it was easy for him to leave the house by the garden. But as he prepared to do so, his eye caught the writing materials on a side table, and he sat down and addressed a note to Mrs. Fenwick. "Tell Mary," he said, "that in a matter

which to me is of life and death, I was forced to speak plainly. Tell her, also, that if she will be my wife, I know well that I shall never have to blush for a deed of hers,—or for a word,—or for a thought.—H. G." Then he went out on to the lawn, and returned home by the path at the back of the church farm.

He had left the Vicarage, making another offer for the girl's hand, as it were, with his last gasp. But as he went, he told himself that it was impossible that it should be accepted. Every chance had now gone from him, and he must look his condition in the face as best he could. It had been bad enough with him before, when no hope had ever been held out to him; when the answers of the girl he loved had always been averse to him; when no one had been told that she was to be his bride. Even then the gnawing sense of disappointment and of failure,—just there, when only he cared for success,—had been more than he could endure without derangement of the outer tranquillity of his life. Even then he had been unable so to live that men should not know that his sorrow had disturbed him. When he had gone to Loring, travelling with a forlorn hope into the neighbourhood of the girl he loved, he had himself been aware that he had lacked strength to control himself in his misfortune. But if his state then had been grievous, what must it be now? It had been told to all the world around him that he had at last won his bride, and he had proceeded, as do jolly thriving bridegrooms, to make his house ready for her reception. Doubting nothing, he had mingled her wishes, her tastes, his thoughts of her, with every action of his life. He had prepared jewels for her, and decorated chambers, and laid out pleasure gardens.

He was a man, simple in his own habits, and not given to squandering his means; but now, at this one moment of his life, when everything was to be done for the delectation of her who was to be his life's companion, he could afford to let prudence go by the board. True, that his pleasure in doing this had been sorely marred by her coldness, by her indifference, even by her self-abnegation; but he had continued to buoy himself up with the idea that all would come right when she should be his wife. Now she had told him that she would never willingly speak to him again, —and he believed her.

He went up to his house, and into his bedroom, and then he sat thinking of it all. And as he thought he heard the voices and the tools of the men at their work; and knew that things were being done which, for him, would never be of avail. He remained there for a couple of hours, without moving. Then he got up and gave the housekeeper instructions to pack up his portmanteau, and the groom orders to bring his gig to the door. "He was going away," he said, and his letters were to be addressed to his club in London. That afternoon he drove himself into Salisbury, that he might catch the evening express train up, and that night he slept at a hotel in London.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MARY LOWTHER LEAVES BULLHAMPTON

It was considerably past one o'clock, and the children's dinner was upon the table in the dining-parlour before anyone in the Vicarage had seen Mary Lowther since the departure of the Squire. When she left Mr. Gilmore, she had gone to her own room, and no one had disturbed her. As the children were being seated, Fenwick returned, and his wife put into his hand the note which Gilmore had left for her.

"What passed between them?" he asked in a whisper.

His wife shook her head. "I have not seen her," she said, "but he talks of speaking plainly, and I suppose it was bitter enough."

"He can be very bitter, if he's driven hard," said the Vicar; "and he has been driven very hard," he added, after a while.

As soon as the children had eaten their dinner, Mrs. Fenwick went up to Mary's room with the Squire's note in her hand. She knocked, and was at once admitted, and she found Mary sitting at her writing-desk.

"Will you not come to lunch, Mary?"

"Yes,—if I ought. I suppose I might not have a cup of tea brought up here?"

"You shall have whatever you like,—here or anywhere else, as far as the Vicarage goes. What did he say to you this morning?"

"It is of no use that I should tell you, Janet."

"You did not yield to him, then?"

"Certainly I did not. Certainly I never shall yield to him. Dear Janet, pray take that as a certainty. Let me make you sure at any rate of that. He must be sure of it himself."

"Here is his note to me, written, I suppose, after you left him." Mary took the scrap of paper from her hand and read it. "He is not sure, you see," continued Mrs. Fenwick. "He has written to me, and I suppose that I must answer him."

"He shall certainly never have to blush for me as his wife," said Mary. But she would not tell her friend of the hard words that had been said to her. She understood well the allusion in Mr. Gilmore's note, but she would not explain it. She had determined, as she thought about it in her solitude, that it would be better that she should never repeat to anyone the cruel words which her lover had spoken to her. Doubtless he had received provocation. All his anger, as well as all his suffering, had come from a constancy in his love for her, which was unsurpassed, if not unequalled, in all that she had read of among men. He had been willing to accept her on conditions most humiliating to himself; and had then been told that, even with those conditions, he was not to have her. She was bound to forgive him almost any offence that he could bestow upon her. He had spoken to her in his wrath words which she thought to be not only cruel, but unmanly. She had told him that she would never speak willingly to him again; and she would keep her word. But she would forgive him. She was bound to forgive him any injury, let it be what it might. She would forgive him;—and as a sign to herself of her pardon she would say

no word of his offence to her friends, the Fenwicks. "He shall certainly never have to blush for me as his wife," she said, as she returned the note to Mrs. Fenwick.

"You mean that you never will be his wife?"

"Certainly, I mean that."

"Have you quarrelled with him, Mary?"

"Quarrelled? How am I to answer that? It will be better that we should not meet again. Of course, our interview could not be pleasant for either of us. I do not wish him to think that there has been a quarrel."

"No man ever did a woman more honour than he has done to you."

"Dearest Janet, let it be dropped;—pray let it be dropped. I am sure you believe me now when I say that it can do no good. I am writing to my aunt this moment, to tell her that I will return. What day shall I name?"

"Have you written to your cousin?"

"No;—I have not written to my cousin. I have not been able to get through it all, Janet, quite so easily as that."

"I suppose you had better go now."

"Yes;—I must go now. I should be a thorn in his side if I were to remain here."

"He will not remain, Mary."

"He shall have the choice, as far as I am concerned. You must let him know at once that I am going. I think I will say Saturday,—the day after to-morrow. I could hardly get away to-morrow."

"Certainly not. Why should you?"

"Yet I am bound to hurry myself,—to release him. And, Janet, will you give him these? They are all

here,—the rubies and all. Ah, me! he touched me that day."

"How like a gentleman he has behaved always."

"It was not that I cared for the stupid stones. You know that I care nothing for anything of the kind. But there was a sort of trust in it,—a desire to show me that everything should be mine,—which would have made me love him,—if it had been possible."

"I would give one hand that you had never seen your cousin."

"And I will give one hand because I have," said Mary, stretching out her right arm. "Nay, I will give both; I will give all, because, having seen him, he is what he is to me. But, Janet, when you return to him these things, say a gentle word from me. I have cost him money, I fear."

"He will think but little of that. He would have given you willingly the last acre of his land, had you wanted it."

"But I did not want it. That was the thing. And all these have been altered, as they would not have been altered, but for me. I do repent that I have brought all this trouble upon him. I cannot do more now than ask you to say so when you restore him his property."

"He will probably pitch them into the cart-ruts. Indeed, I will not give them to him. I will simply tell him that they are in my hands, and Frank shall have them locked up at the banker's. Well;—I suppose I had better go down and write him a line."

"And I will name Saturday to my aunt," said Mary.

Mrs. Fenwick immediately went to her desk, and wrote to her friend.

"DEAR HARRY,

"I am sure it is of no use. Knowing how persistent is your constancy, I would not say so were I not quite, quite certain. She goes to Loring on Saturday. Will it not be better that you should come to us for awhile after she has left us? You will be less desolate with Frank than you would be alone.

"Ever yours,

"JANET FENWICK.

"She has left your jewels with me. I merely tell you this for your information;—not to trouble you with the things now."

And then she added a second postscript.

"She regrets deeply what you have suffered on her account, and bids me beg you to forgive her."

Thus it was settled that Mary Lowther should leave Bullhampton, again returning to Loring, as she had done before, in order that she might escape from her suitor. In writing to her aunt, she had thought it best to say nothing of Walter Marrable. She had not as yet written to her cousin, postponing that work for the following day. She would have postponed it longer had it been possible; but she felt herself to be bound to let him have her reply before he left Dunripple. She would have much preferred to return to Loring, to have put miles between herself and Bullhampton, before she wrote a letter which must contain words of happy joy. It would have gratified her to have postponed for awhile all her future happiness, knowing that it was there before her, and that it would come to

her at last. But it could not be postponed. Her cousin's letter was burning her pocket. She already felt that she was treating him badly in keeping it by her without sending him the reply that would make him happy. She could not bring herself to write the letter till the other matter was absolutely settled; and yet, all delay was treachery to him; for,—as she repeated to herself again and again,—there could be no answer but one. She had, however, settled it all now. On the Saturday morning she would start for Loring, and she would write her letter on the Friday in time for that day's post. Walter would still be at Dunripple on the Sunday, and on the Sunday morning her letter would reach him. She had studied the course of post between Bullhampton and her lover's future residence, and knew to an hour when her letter would be in his hands.

On that afternoon she could hardly maintain the tranquillity of her usual demeanour when she met the Vicar before dinner. Not a word, however, was said about Gilmore. Fenwick partly understood that he and his wife were in some degree responsible for the shipwreck that had come, and had determined that Mary was to be forgiven,—at any rate by him. He and his wife had taken counsel together, and had resolved that, unless circumstances should demand it, they would never again mention the Squire's name in Mary Lowther's hearing. The attempt had been made and had utterly failed, and now there must be an end of it. On the next morning he heard that Gilmore had gone up to London, and he went up to the Privets to learn what he could from the servants there. No one knew more than that the Squire's letters were to be directed to him at his Club. The men were still

at work about the place; but Ambrose told him that they were all at sea as to what they should do, and appealed to him for orders. "If we shut off on Saturday, sir, the whole place 'll be a muck of mud and nothin' else all winter," said the gardener. The Vicar suggested that after all a muck of mud outside the house wouldn't do much harm. "But master ain't the man to put up with that all'ays, and it'll cost twice as much to have 'em about the place again arter a bit." This, however, was the least trouble. If Ambrose was disconsolate out of doors, the man who was looking after the work indoors was twice more so. "If we be to work on up to Saturday night," he said, "and then do never a stroke more, we be a-doing nothing but mischief. Better leave it at once nor that, sir." Then Fenwick was obliged to take upon himself to give certain orders. The papering of the rooms should be finished where the walls had been already disturbed, and the cornices completed, and the wood-work painted. But as for the furniture, hangings, and such like, they should be left till further orders should be received from the owner. As for the mud and muck in the garden, his only care was that the place should not be so left as to justify the neighbours in saying that Mr. Gilmore was demented. But he would be able to get instructions from his friend, or perhaps to see him, in time to save danger in that respect.

In the meantime Mary Lowther had gone up to her room, and seated herself with her blotting-book and pens and ink. She had now before her the pleasure,—or was it a task?—of answering her cousin's letter. She had that letter in her hand, and had already read it twice this morning. She had thought that she would so well know how to answer it; but, now that the pen

was in her hand, she found that the thing to be done was not so easy. How much must she tell him, and how would she tell it? It was not that there was anything which she desired to keep back from him. She was willing,—nay, desirous,—that he should know all that she had said, and done, and thought; but it would have been a blessing if all could have been told to him by other agency than her own. He would not condemn her. Nor, as she thought of her own conduct back from one scene to another, did she condemn herself. Yet there was that of which she could not write without a feeling of shame. And then, how could she be happy, when she had caused so much misery? And how could she write her letter without expressing her happiness? She wished that her own identity might be divided, so that she might rejoice over Walter's love with the one moiety, and grieve with the other at all the trouble she had brought upon the man whose love to her had been so constant. She sat with the open letter in her hand, thinking over all this, till she told herself at last that no further thinking could avail her. She must bend herself over the table, and take the pen in her hand, and write the words, let them come as they would.

Her letter, she thought, must be longer than his. He had a knack of writing short letters; and then there had been so little for him to say. He had merely a single question to ask; and, although he had asked it more than once,—as is the manner of people in asking such questions,—still, a sheet of note-paper loosely filled had sufficed. Then she read it again. "If you bid me, I will be with you early next week." What if she told him nothing, but only bade him come to her? After all, would it not be best to write no

more than that? Then she took the pen, and in three minutes her letter was completed.

"The Vicarage, Friday.

"DEAREST, DEAREST WALTER,

"Do come to me,—as soon as you can, and I will never send you away again. I go to Loring to-morrow, and, of course, you must come there. I cannot write it all; but I will tell you everything when we meet. I am very sorry for your cousin Gregory, because he was so good.

"Always your own,

"MARY.

"But do not think that I want to hurry you. I have said come at once; but I do not mean that so as to interfere with you. You must have so many things to do; and if I get one line from you to say that you will come, I can be ever so patient. I have not been happy once since we parted. It is easy for people to say that they will conquer their feelings, but it has seemed to me to be quite impossible to do it. I shall never try again."

As soon as the body of her letter was written, she could have continued her postscript for ever. It seemed to her then as though nothing would be more delightful than to let the words flow on with full expressions of all her love and happiness. To write to him was pleasant enough, as long as there came on her no need to mention Mr. Gilmore's name.

That was to be her last evening at Bullhampton; and though no allusion was made to the subject, they were all thinking that she could never return to Bull-

hampton again. She had been almost as much at home with them as with her aunt at Loring; and now she must leave the place for ever. But they said not a word; and the evening passed by almost as had passed all other evenings. The remembrance of what had taken place since she had been at Bullhampton made it almost impossible to speak of her departure.

In the morning she was to be again driven to the railway-station at Westbury. Mr. Fenwick had work in his parish which would keep him at home, and she was to be trusted to the driving of the groom. "If I were to be away to-morrow," he said, as he parted from her that evening, "the churchwardens would have me up to the archdeacon, and the archdeacon might tell the Marquis, and where should I be then?" Of course she begged him not to give it a second thought. "Dear Mary," he said, "I should of all things have liked to have seen the last of you,—that you might know that I love you as well as ever." Then she burst into tears, and kissed him, and told him that she would always look to him as to a brother.

She called Mrs. Fenwick into her own room before she undressed. "Janet," she said, "dearest Janet, we are not to part for ever?"

"For ever! No, certainly. Why for ever?"

"I shall never see you, unless you will come to me. Promise me that if ever I have a house you will come to me."

"Of course you will have a house, Mary."

"And you will come and see me,—will you not? Promise that you will come to me. I can never come back to dear, dear Bullhampton."

"No doubt we shall meet, Mary."

"And you must bring the children—my darling

Flos! How else ever shall I see her? And you must write to me, Janet."

"I will write,—as often as you do, I don't doubt."

"You must tell me how he is, Janet. You must not suppose that I do not care for his welfare, because I have not loved him. I know that my coming here has been a curse to him. But I could not help it. Could I have helped it, Janet?"

"Poor fellow! I wish it had not been so."

"But you do not blame me;—not much? Oh, Janet, say that you do not condemn me."

"I can say that with most perfect truth. I do not blame you. It has been most unfortunate; but I do not blame you. I am sure that you have struggled to do the best that you could."

"God bless you, my dearest, dearest friend! If you could only know how anxious I have been not to be wrong. But things have been wrong, and I could not put them right."

On the next morning they packed her into the little four-wheeled phaeton, and so she left Bullhampton. "I believe her to be as good a girl as ever lived," said the Vicar; "but all the same, I wish with all my heart that she had never come to Bullhampton."

CHAPTER XXIX

AT THE MILL

THE presence of Carry Brattle was required in Salisbury for the trial of John Burrows and Lawrence Acorn on Wednesday, the 22nd of August. Our Vicar, who had learned that the judges would come into the city only late on the previous evening, and that the day following their entrance would doubtless be so fully occupied with other matters as to render it very improbable that the affair of the murder would then come up, had endeavoured to get permission to postpone Carry's journey; but the little men in authority are always stern on such points, and witnesses are usually treated as persons who are not entitled to have any views as to their own personal comfort or welfare. Lawyers, who are paid for their presence, may plead other engagements, and their pleas will be considered; and if a witness be a lord, it may perhaps be thought very hard that he should be dragged away from his amusements. But the ordinary, commonplace witness must simply listen and obey—at his peril. It was thus decided that Carry must be in Salisbury on the Wednesday, and remain there, hanging about the Court, till her services should be wanted. Fenwick, who had been in Salisbury, had seen that accommodation should be provided for her and for the miller at the house of Mrs. Stiggs.

The miller had decided upon going with his daughter. The Vicar did not go down to the mill again;

but Mrs. Fenwick had seen Brattle, and had learned that such was to be the case. The old man said nothing to his own people about it till the Monday afternoon, up to which time Fanny was prepared to accompany her sister. He was then told, when he came in from the mill for his tea, that word had come down from the Vicarage that there would be two bedrooms for them at Mrs. Stiggs's house.

"I don't know why there should be the cost of a second room," said Fanny; "Carry and I won't want two beds."

Up to this time there had been no reconciliation between the miller and his younger daughter. Carry would ask her father whether she should do this or that, and the miller would answer her as a surly master will answer a servant whom he does not like; but the father, as a father, had never spoken to the child; nor, up to this moment, had he said a word even to his wife of his intended journey to Salisbury. But now he was driven to speak. He had placed himself in the arm chair, and was sitting with his hands on his knees gazing into the empty fire-grate. Carry was standing at the open window, pulling the dead leaves off three or four geraniums which her mother kept there in pots. Fanny was passing in and out from the back kitchen, in which the water for their tea was being boiled, and Mrs. Brattle was in her usual place with her spectacles on, and a darning needle in her hand. A minute was allowed to pass by before the miller answered his eldest daughter.

"There'll be two beds wanted," he said; "I told Muster Fenwick as I'd go with the girl myself;—and so I wull."

Carry started so that she broke the flower which

she was touching. Mrs. Brattle immediately stopped her needle, and withdrew her spectacles from her nose. Fanny, who was that instant bringing the tea-pot out of the back kitchen, put it down among the tea cups, and stood still to consider what she had heard.

"Dear, dear, dear!" said the mother.

"Father," said Fanny, coming up to him, and just touching him with her hand; "'twill be best for you to go, much best. I am heartily glad on it, and so will Carry be."

"I knows nowt about that," said the miller; "but I mean to go, and that's all about it. I ain't a-been to Salsbry these fifteen year and more, and I shan't be there never again."

"There's no saying that, father," said Fanny.

"And it ain't for no pleasure as I'm going now. Nobody'll s'pect that of me. I'd liever let the millstone come on my foot."

There was nothing more said about it that evening, nothing more at least in the miller's hearing. Carry and her sister were discussing it nearly the whole night. It was very soon plain to Fanny that Carry had heard the tidings with dismay. To be alone with her father for two, three, or perhaps four days, seemed to her to be so terrible, that she hardly knew how to face the misery and gloom of his company,—in addition to the fears she had as to what they would say and do to her in the Court. Since she had been home, she had learned almost to tremble at the sound of her father's foot; and yet she had known that he would not harm her, would hardly notice her, would not do more than look at her. But now, for three long frightful days to come, she would be subject to his wrath during every moment of her life.

"Will he speak to me, Fanny, d'y think?" she asked.

"Of course he'll speak to you, child."

"But he hasn't, you know,—not since I've been home; not once; not as he does to you and mother. I know he hates me, and wishes I was dead. And, Fanny, I wishes it myself every day of my life."

"He wishes nothing of the kind, Carry."

"Why don't he say one kind word to me, then? I know I've been bad. But I ain't a-done a single thing since I've been home as 'd 'a' made him angry if he seed it, or said a word as he mightn't 'a' heard."

"I don't think you have, dear."

"Then why can't he come round, if it was ever so little? I'd sooner he'd beat me; that I would."

"He'll never do that, Carry. I don't know as he ever laid a hand upon one of us since we was little things."

"It 'd better than never speaking to a girl. Only for you and mother, Fan, I'd be off again."

"You would not. You know you would not. How dare you say that?"

"But why shouldn't he say a word to one, so that one shouldn't go about like a dead body in the house?"

"Carry dear, listen to this. If you'll manage well; if you'll be good to him, and patient while you are with him; if you'll bear with him, and yet be gentle when he——"

"I am gentle,—always,—now."

"You are, dear; but when he speaks, as he'll have to speak when you're all alone like, be very gentle. Maybe, Carry, when you've come back, he will be gentle with you."

They had ever so much more to discuss. Would Sam be at the trial? And, if so, would he and his father speak to each other? They had both been told that Sam had been summoned, and that the police would enforce his attendance; but they were neither of them sure whether he would be there in custody or as a free man. At last they went to sleep, but Carry's slumbers were not very sound. As has been told before, it was the miller's custom to be up every morning at five. The two girls would afterwards rise at six, and then, an hour after that, Mrs. Brattle would be instructed that her time had come. On the Tuesday morning, however, the miller was not the first of the family to leave his bed. Carry crept out of hers by the earliest dawn of daylight, without waking her sister, and put on her clothes stealthily. Then she made her way silently to the front door, which she opened, and stood there outside waiting till her father should come.

The morning, though it was in August, was chill, and the time seemed to be very long. She had managed to look at the old clock as she passed, and had seen that it wanted a quarter to five. She knew that her father was never later than five. What, if on this special morning he should not come, just because she had resolved, after many inward struggles, to make one great effort to obtain his pardon.

At last he was coming. She heard his step in the passage, and then she was aware that he had stopped when he found the fastenings of the door unloosed. She perceived too that he delayed to examine the lock,—as it was natural that he should do; and she had forgotten that he would be arrested by the open door. Thinking of this in the moment of time that

was allowed to her, she hurried forward and encountered him.

"Father," she said; "it is I."

He was angry that she should have dared to unbolt the door, or to withdraw the bars. What was she, that she should be trusted to open or to close the house? And there came upon him some idea of wanton and improper conduct. Why was she there at that hour? Must it be that he should put her again from the shelter of his roof?

Carry was clever enough to perceive in a moment what was passing in the old man's mind. "Father," she said, "it was to see you. And I thought,—perhaps,—I might say it out here." He believed her at once. In whatever spirit he might accept her present effort, that other idea had already vanished. She was there that they two might be alone together in the fresh morning air, and he knew that it was so. "Father," she said, looking up into his face. Then she fell on the ground at his feet, and embraced his knees, and lay there sobbing. She had intended to ask him for forgiveness, but she was not able to say a word. Nor did he speak for awhile; but he stooped and raised her up tenderly; and then, when she was again standing by him, he stepped on as though he were going to the mill without a word. But he had not rebuked her, and his touch had been very gentle. "Father," she said, following him, "if you could forgive me! I know I have been bad, but if you could forgive me!"

He went to the very door of the mill before he turned; and she, when she saw that he did not come back to her, paused upon the bridge. She had used all her eloquence. She knew no other words with which to move him. She felt that she had failed, but she

could do no more. But he stopped again without entering the mill.

"Child," he said at last, "come here, then." She ran at once to meet him. "I will forgive thee. There. I will forgive thee, and trust thou may'st be a better girl than thou hast been."

She flew to him and threw her arms round his neck and kissed his face and breast. "Oh, father," she said, "I will be good. I will try to be good. Only you will speak to me."

"Get thee into the house now. I have forgiven thee." So saying he passed on to his morning's work.

Carry, running into the house, at once roused her sister. "Fanny," she exclaimed, "he has forgiven me at last; he has said that he will forgive me."

But to the miller's mind, and to his sense of justice, the forgiveness thus spoken did not suffice. When he returned to breakfast, Mrs. Brattle had, of course, been told of the morning's work, and had rejoiced greatly. It was to her as though the greatest burden of her life had now been taken from her weary back. Her girl, to her loving motherly heart, now that he who had in all things been the lord of her life had vouchsafed his pardon to the poor sinner, would be as pure as when she had played about the mill in all her girlish innocence. The mother had known that her child was still under a cloud, but the cloud to her had consisted in the father's wrath rather than in the feeling of any public shame. To her a sin repented was a sin no more, and her love for her child made her sure of the sincerity of that repentance. But there could be no joy over the sinner in this world till the head of the house should again have taken her to his heart. When the miller came in to his breakfast the three women

were standing together, not without some outward marks of contentment. Mrs. Brattle's cap was clean, and even Fanny, who was ever tidy and never smart, had managed in some way to add something bright to her appearance. Where is the woman who, when she has been pleased, will not show her pleasure by some sign in her outward garniture? But still there was anxiety. "Will he call me Carry?" the girl had asked. He had not done so when he pronounced her pardon at the mill door. Though they were standing together they had not decided on any line of action. The pardon had been spoken and they were sure that it would not be revoked; but how it would operate at first none of them had even guessed.

The miller, when he had entered the room and come among them, stood with his two hands resting on the round table, and thus he addressed them: "It was a bad time with us when the girl, whom we had all loved a'most too well, forgot herself and us, and brought us to shame,—we who had never known shame afore,—and became a thing so vile as I won't name it. It was well nigh the death o' me, I know."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Fanny.

"Hold your peace, Fanny, and let me say my say out. It was very bad then; and when she come back to us, and was took in, so that she might have her bit to eat under an honest roof, it was bad still;—for she was a shame to us as had never been shamed afore. For myself I felt so, that though she was allays near me, my heart was away from her, and she was not one with me, not as her sister is one, and her mother, who never know'd a thought in her heart as wasn't fit for a woman to have there." By this time Carry was sobbing on her mother's bosom, and it would be difficult to say

whose affliction was the sharpest. "But them as falls may right themselves, unless they be chance killed as they falls. If my child be sorry for her sin——"

"Oh, father, I am sorry."

"I will bring myself to forgive her. That it won't stick here," and the miller struck his heart violently with his open palm, "I won't be such a liar as to say. For there ain't no good in a lie. But there shall be never a word about it more out o' my mouth,—and she may come to me again as my child."

There was a solemnity about the old man's speech which struck them all with so much awe that none of them for a while knew how to move or to speak. Fanny was the first to stir, and she came to him and put her arm through his and leaned her head upon his shoulder.

"Get me my breakfast, girl," he said to her. But before he had moved Carry had thrown herself weeping on his bosom. "That will do," he said. "That will do. Sit down and eat thy victuals." Then there was not another word said, and the breakfast passed off in silence.

Though the women talked of what had occurred throughout the day, not a word more dropped from the miller's mouth upon the subject. When he came in to dinner he took his food from Carry's hand and thanked her,—as he would have thanked his elder daughter,—but he did not call her by her name. Much had to be done in preparing for the morrow's journey, and for the days through which they two might be detained at the assizes. The miller had borrowed a cart in which he was to drive himself and his daughter to the Bullhampton road station, and, when he went to bed, he expressed his determination of starting at

nine, so as to catch a certain train into Salisbury. They had been told that it would be sufficient if they were in the city that day at one o'clock.

On the next morning the miller was in his mill as usual in the morning. He said nothing about the work, but the women knew that it must in the main stand still. Everything could not be trusted to one man, and that man a hireling. But nothing was said of this. He went into his mill, and the women prepared his breakfast, and the clean shirt and the tidy Sunday coat in which he was to travel. And Carry was ready dressed for the journey;—so pretty, with her bright curls and sweet dimpled cheeks, but still with that look of fear and sorrow which the coming ordeal could not but produce. The miller returned, dressed himself as he was desired, and took his place at the table in the kitchen; when the front door was again opened,—and Sam Brattle stood among them!

"Father," said he, "I've turned up just in time."

Of course the consternation among them was great; but no reference was made to the quarrel which had divided the father and son when last they had parted. Sam explained that he had come across the country from the north, travelling chiefly by railway, but that he had walked from the Swindon station to Marlborough on the preceding evening, and from thence to Bullhampton that morning. He had come by Birmingham and Gloucester, and thence to Swindon.

"And now, mother, if you'll give me a mouthful of some'at to eat, you won't find that I'm above eating of it."

He had been summoned to Salisbury, he said, for that day, but nothing should induce him to go there till the Friday. He surmised that he knew a thing or

two, and as the trial wouldn't come off before Friday at the earliest, he wouldn't show his face in Salisbury before that day. He strongly urged Carry to be equally sagacious, and used some energetic arguments to the same effect on his father, when he found that his father was also to be at the assizes; but the miller did not like to be taught by his son, and declared that as the legal document said Wednesday, on the Wednesday his daughter should be there.

"And what about the mill?" asked Sam. The miller only shook his head. "Then there's only so much more call for me to stay them two days," said Sam. "I'll be at it hammer and tongs, father, till it's time for me to start o' Friday. You tell 'em as how I'm coming. I'll be there afore they want me. And when they've got me they won't get much out of me, I guess."

To all this the miller made no reply, not forbidding his son to work the mill, nor thanking him for the offer. But Mrs. Brattle and Fanny, who could read every line in his face, knew that he was well pleased.

And then there was the confusion of the start. Fanny, in her solicitude for her father, brought out a little cushion for his seat. "I don't want no cushion to sit on," said he; "give it here to Carry." It was the first time that he had called her by her name, and it was not lost on the poor girl.

CHAPTER XXX

SIR GREGORY MARRABLE HAS A HEADACHE

Mary Lowther, in her letter to her aunt, had in one line told the story of her rupture with Mr. Gilmore. This line had formed a postscript, and the writer had hesitated much before she added it. She had not intended to write to her aunt on this subject; but she had remembered at the last moment how much easier it would be to tell the remainder of her story on her arrival at Loring, if so much had already been told beforehand. Therefore it was that she had added these words. "Everything has been broken off between me and Mr. Gilmore—for ever."

This was a terrible blow upon poor Miss Marrable, who, up to the moment of her receiving that letter, thought that her niece was disposed of in the manner that had seemed most desirable to all her friends. Aunt Sarah loved her niece dearly, and by no means looked forward to improved happiness in her own old age when she should be left alone in the house at Uphill; but she entertained the view about young women which is usual with old women who have young women under their charge, and she thought it much best that this special young woman should get herself married. The old women are right in their views on this matter; and the young women, who on this point are not often refractory, are right also. Miss Marrable, who entertained a very strong opinion on the subject above-mentioned, was very unhappy when she was

thus abruptly told by her own peculiar young woman that this second engagement had been broken off and sent to the winds. It had become a theory on the part of Mary's friends that the Gilmore match was the proper thing for her. At last, after many difficulties, the Gilmore match had been arranged. The anxiety as to Mary's future life was at an end, and the theory of the elders concerned with her welfare was to be carried out. Then there came a short note, proclaiming her return home, and simply telling as a fact almost indifferent,—in a single line,—that all the trouble hitherto taken as to her own disposition had entirely been thrown away. "Everything has been broken off between me and Mr. Gilmore." It was a cruel and a heartrending postscript!

Poor Miss Marrable knew very well that she was armed with no parental authority. She could hold her theory, and could advise; but she could do no more. She could not even scold. And there had been some qualm of conscience on her part as to Walter Marrable, now that Walter Marrable had been taken in hand and made much of by the baronet,—and now, also, that poor Gregory had been removed from the path. No doubt she, Aunt Sarah, had done all in her power to aid the difficulties which had separated the two cousins;—and while she thought that the Gilmore match had been the consequence of such aiding on her part, she was happy enough in reflecting upon what she had done. Old Sir Gregory would not have taken Walter by the hand unless Walter had been free to marry Edith Brownlow; and though she could not quite resolve that the death of the younger Gregory had been part of the family arrangement due to the happy policy of the elder Marrables generally, still she

was quite sure that Walter's present position at Dunripple had come entirely from the favour with which he had regarded the baronet's wishes as to Edith. Mary was provided for with the Squire, who was in immediate possession; and Walter with his bride would become as it were the eldest son of Dunripple. It was all as comfortable as could be till there came this unfortunate postscript.

The letter reached her on Friday, and on Saturday Mary arrived. Miss Marrable determined that she would not complain. As regarded her own comfort it was doubtless all for the best. But old women are never selfish in regard to the marriage of young women. That the young women belonging to them should be settled,—and thus got rid of,—is no doubt the great desire; but, whether the old woman be herself married or a spinster, the desire is founded on an adamantine confidence that marriage is the most proper and the happiest thing for the young woman. The belief is so thorough that the woman would cease to be a woman, would already have become a brute, who would desire to keep any girl belonging to her out of matrimony for the sake of companionship to herself. But no woman does so desire in regard to those who are dear and near to her. A dependant, distant in blood, or a paid assistant, may find here and there a want of the true feminine sympathy; but in regard to a daughter, or one held as a daughter, it is never wanting. "As the pelican loveth her young do I love thee; and therefore will I give thee away in marriage to some one strong enough to hold thee, even though my heartstrings be torn asunder by the parting." Such is always the heart's declaration of the mother respecting her daughter. The match-making of mothers is

the natural result of mother's love; for the ambition of one woman for another is never other than this,—that the one loved by her shall be given to a man to be loved more worthily. Poor Aunt Sarah, considering of these things during those two lonely days, came to the conclusion that if ever Mary were to be so loved again that she might be given away, a long time might first elapse; and then she was aware that such gifts given late lose much of their value, and have to be given cheaply.

Mary herself, as she was driven slowly up the hill to her aunt's door, did not share her aunt's melancholy. To be returned as a bad shilling, which has been presented over the counter and found to be bad, must be very disagreeable to a young woman's feelings. That was not the case with Mary Lowther. She had, no doubt, a great sorrow at heart. She had created a shipwreck which she did regret most bitterly. But the sorrow and the regret were not humiliating, as they would have been had they been caused by failure on her own part. And then she had behind her the strong comfort of her own rock, of which nothing should now rob her,—which should be a rock for rest and safety, and not a rock for shipwreck, and as to the disposition of which Aunt Sarah's present ideas were so very erroneous!

It was impossible that the first evening should pass without a word or two about poor Gilmore. Mary knew well enough that she had told her aunt nothing of her renewed engagement with her cousin; but she could not bring herself at once to utter a song of triumph, as she would have done had she blurted out all her story. Not a word was said about either lover till they were seated together in the evening. "What you

tell me about Mr. Gilmore has made me so unhappy," said Miss Marrable sadly.

"It could not be helped, Aunt Sarah. I tried my best, but it could not be helped. Of course I have been very, very unhappy myself."

"I don't pretend to understand it."

"And yet it is so easily understood!" said Mary, pleading hard for herself. "I did not love him, and——"

"But you had accepted him, Mary."

"I know I had. It is so natural that you should think that I have behaved badly."

"I have not said so, my dear."

"I know that, Aunt Sarah; but if you think so,—and of course you do,—write and ask Janet Fenwick. She will tell you everything. You know how devoted she is to Mr. Gilmore. She would have done anything for him. But even she will tell you that at last I could not help it. When I was so very wretched I thought that I would do my best to comply with other people's wishes. I got a feeling that nothing signified for myself. If they had told me to go into a convent or to be a nurse in a hospital I would have gone. I had nothing to care for, and if I could do what I was told perhaps it might be best."

"But why did you not go on with it, my dear?"

"It was impossible—after Walter had written to me."

"But Walter is to marry Edith Brownlow."

"No, dear aunt; no. Walter is to marry me. Don't look like that, Aunt Sarah. It is true;—it is, indeed." She had now dragged her chair close to her aunt's seat upon the sofa, so that she could put her hands upon her aunt's knees. "All that about Miss Brownlow has been a fable."

"Parson John told me that it was fixed."

"It is not fixed. The other thing is fixed. Parson John tells many fables. He is to come here."

"Who is to come here?"

"Walter,—of course. He is to be here,—I don't know how soon; but I shall hear from him. Dear aunt, you must be good to him;—indeed you must. He is your cousin just as much as mine."

"I'm not in love with him, Mary."

"But I am, Aunt Sarah. Oh, dear, how much I am in love with him! It never changed in the least, though I struggled, and struggled not to think of him. I broke his picture and burned it;—and I would not have a scrap of his handwriting;—I would not have near me anything that he had even spoken of. But it was no good. I could not get away from him for an hour. Now I shall never want to get away from him again. As for Mr. Gilmore, it would have come to the same thing at last, had I never heard another word from Walter Marrable. I could not have done it."

"I suppose we must submit to it," said Aunt Sarah, after a pause. This certainly was not the most exhilarating view which might have been taken of the matter as far as Mary was concerned; but as it did not suggest any open opposition to her scheme, and as there was no refusal to see Walter when he should again appear at Uphill as her lover, she made no complaint. Miss Marrable went on to inquire how Sir Gregory would like these plans, which were so diametrically opposed to his own. As to that, Mary could say nothing. No doubt Walter would make a clean breast of it to Sir Gregory before he left Dunripple, and would be able to tell them what had passed when he came to Loring.

Mary, however, did not forget to argue that the ground on which Walter Marrable stood was his own ground. After the death of two men, the youngest of whom was over seventy, the property would be his property, and could not be taken from him. If Sir Gregory chose to quarrel with him,—as to the probability of which, Mary and her aunt professed very different opinions,—they must wait. Waiting now would be very different from what it had been when their prospects in life had not seemed to depend in any degree upon the succession to the family property. "And I know myself better now than I did then," said Mary. "Though it were to be for all my life, I would wait."

On the Monday she got a letter from her cousin. It was very short, and there was not a word in it about Sir Gregory or Edith Brownlow. It only said that he was the happiest man in the world, and that he would be at Loring on the following Saturday. He must return at once to Birmingham, but would certainly be at Loring on Saturday. He had written to his uncle to ask for hospitality. He did not suppose that Parson John would refuse; but should this be the case, he would put up at The Dragon. Mary might be quite sure that she would see him on Saturday.

And on the Saturday he came. The Parson had consented to receive him; but, not thinking highly of the wisdom of the proposed visit, had worded his letter rather coldly. But of that Walter in his present circumstances thought but little. He was hardly within the house before he had told his story. "You haven't heard, I suppose," he said, "that Mary and I have made it up?"

"How made it up?"

"Well,—I mean that you shall make us man and wife some day."

"But I thought you were to marry Edith Brownlow."

"Who told you that, sir? I am sure Edith did not, nor yet her mother. But I believe these sort of things are often settled without consulting the principals."

"And what does my brother say?"

"Sir Gregory, you mean?"

"Of course I mean Sir Gregory. I don't suppose you'd ask your father."

"I never had the slightest intention, sir, of asking either one or the other. I don't suppose that I am to ask his leave to be married, like a young girl; and it isn't likely that any objection on family grounds could be made to such a woman as Mary Lowther."

"You needn't ask leave of any one, most noble Hector. That is a matter of course. You can marry the cook-maid to-morrow, if you please. But I thought you meant to live at Dunripple?"

"So I shall,—part of the year; if Sir Gregory likes it."

"And that you were to have an allowance and all that sort of thing. Now, if you do marry the cook-maid——"

"I am not going to marry the cook-maid,—as you know very well."

"Or if you marry any one else in opposition to my brother's wishes, I don't suppose it likely that he'll bestow that which he intended to give as a reward to you for following his wishes."

"He can do as he pleases. The moment that it was settled I told him."

"And what did he say?"

"He complained of headache. Sir Gregory very often does complain of headache. When I took leave of him, he said I should hear from him."

"Then it's all up with Dunripple for you,—as long as he lives. I've no doubt that since poor Gregory's death your father's interest in the property has been disposed of among the Jews to the last farthing."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"And you are,—just where you were, my boy."

"That depends entirely upon Sir Gregory. You may be sure of this, sir,—that I shall ask him for nothing. If the worst comes to the worst, I can go to the Jews as well as my father. I won't, unless I am driven."

He was with Mary, of course, that evening, walking again along the banks of the Lurwell, as they had first done now nearly twelve months since. Then the autumn had begun, and now the last of the summer months was near its close. How very much had happened to her, or had seemed to happen, during the interval. At that time she had thrice declined Harry Gilmore's suit; but she had done so without any weight on her own conscience. Her friends had wished her to marry the man, and therefore she had been troubled; but the trouble had lain light upon her, and as she looked back at it all, she felt that at that time there had been something of triumph at her heart. A girl when she is courted knows at any rate that she is thought worthy of courtship, and in this instance she had been at least courted worthily. Since then a whole world of trouble had come upon her from that source. She had been driven hither and thither, first by love, and then by a false idea of duty, till she had come almost to shipwreck. And in her tossing she had gone

against another barque which, for aught she knew, might even yet go down from the effects of the collision. She could not be all happy, even though she were again leaning on Walter Marrable's arm, or again sitting with it round her waist, beneath the shade of the trees on the banks of the Lurwell.

"Then we must wait, and this time we must be patient," she said, when he told her of poor Sir Gregory's headache.

"I cannot ask him for anything," said Walter.

"Of course not. Do not ask anybody for anything,—but just wait. I have quite made up my mind that forty-five for the gentleman, and thirty-five for the lady, is quite time enough for marrying."

"The grapes are sour," said Walter.

"They are not sour at all, sir," said Mary.

"I was speaking of my own grapes, as I look at them when I use that argument for my own comfort. The worst of it is that when we know that the grapes are not sour,—that they are the sweetest grapes in the world,—the argument is of no use. I won't tell any lies about it, to myself or anybody else. I want my grapes at once."

"And so do I," said Mary eagerly; "of course I do. I am not going to make any pretence with you. Of course I want them at once. But I have learned to know that they are precious enough to be worth the waiting for. I made a fool of myself once; but I shall not do it again, let Sir Gregory make himself ever so disagreeable."

This was all very pleasant for Captain Marrable. Ah, yes! what other moment in a man's life is at all equal to that in which he is being flattered to the top of his bent by the love of the woman he loves. To be

flattered by the love of a woman whom he does not love is almost equally unpleasant,—if the man be anything of a man. But at the present moment our Captain was supremely happy. His Thais was telling him that he was indeed her king, and should he not take the goods with which the gods provided him? To have been robbed of his all by a father, and to have an uncle who would have a headache instead of making settlements,—these indeed were drawbacks; but the pleasure was so sweet that even such drawbacks as these could hardly sully his bliss. "If you knew what your letter was to me!" she said, as she leaned against his shoulder. His father and his uncle and all the Marrables on the earth might do their worst, they could not rob the present hour of its joy.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE SQUIRE IS VERY OBSTINATE

Mr. Gilmore left his own home on a Thursday afternoon, and on the Monday when the Vicar again visited the Privets nothing had been heard of him. Money had been left with the bailiff for the Saturday wages of the men working about the place, but no provision for anything had been made beyond that. The Sunday had been wet from morning to night, and nothing could possibly be more disconsolate than the aspect of things round the house, or more disreputable if they were to be left in their present condition. The barrows, and the planks, and the pickaxes had been taken away, which things, though they are not in themselves beautiful, are safeguards against the ill-effects of ugliness, as they inform the eyes why it is that such disorder lies around. There was the disorder at the Privets now without any such instruction to the eye. Pits were full of muddy water, and half-formed paths had become the beds of stagnant pools. The Vicar then went into the house, and though there was still a workman and a boy who were listlessly pulling about some rolls of paper, there were ample signs that misfortune had come and that neglect was the consequence. "And all this," said Fenwick to himself, "because the man cannot get the idea of a certain woman out of his head!" Then he thought of himself and his own character, and asked himself whether, in any position of life, he could have been thus over-

ruled to misery by circumstances altogether outside himself. Misfortunes might come which would be very heavy; his wife or children might die; or he might become a pauper; or subject to some crushing disease. But Gilmore's trouble had not fallen upon him from the hands of Providence. He had set his heart upon the gaining of a thing, and was now absolutely broken-hearted because he could not have it. And the thing was a woman. Fenwick admitted to himself that the thing itself was the most worthy for which a man can struggle; but would not admit that even in his search for that a man should allow his heart to give way, or his strength to be broken down.

He went up to the house again on the Wednesday, and again on the Thursday,—but nothing had been heard from the Squire. The bailiff was very unhappy. Even though there might come a cheque on the Saturday morning, which both Fenwick and the bailiff thought to be probable, still there would be grave difficulties.

"Here'll be the first of September on us afore we know where we are," said the bailiff; "and is we to go on with the horses?"

For the Squire was of all men the most regular, and began to get his horses into condition on the first of September as regularly as he began to shoot partridges. The Vicar went home and then made up his mind that he would go up to London after his friend. He must provide for his next Sunday's duty, but he could do that out of a neighbouring parish, and he would start on the morrow. He arranged the matter with his wife and with his friend's curate, and on the Friday he started.

He drove himself into Salisbury instead of to the

Bullhampton Road station in order that he might travel by the express train. That at least was the reason which he gave to himself and to his wife. But there was present to his mind the idea that he might look into the court and see how the trial was going on. Poor Carry Brattle would have a bad time of it beneath a lawyer's claws. Such a one as Carry, of the evil of whose past life there was no doubt, and who would appear as a witness against a man whom she had once been engaged to marry, would certainly meet with no mercy from a cross-examining barrister. The broad landmarks between the respectable and the disreputable may guide the tone of a lawyer somewhat, when he has a witness in his power; but the finer lines which separate that which is at the moment good and true from that which is false and bad cannot be discerned amidst the turmoil of a trial, unless the eyes, and the ears, and the inner touch of him who has the handling of the victim be of a quality more than ordinarily high.

The Vicar drove himself over to Salisbury and had an hour there for strolling into the court. He had heard on the previous day that the case would be brought on the first thing on the Friday, and it was half-past eleven when he made his way in through the crowd. The train by which he was to be taken on to London did not start till half-past twelve. At that moment the court was occupied in deciding whether a certain tradesman, living at Devizes, should or should not be on the jury. The man himself objected that, being a butcher, he was, by reason of the second nature acquired in his business, too cruel, and bloody-minded to be entrusted with an affair of life and death. To a proposition in itself so reasonable no direct answer was made; but it was argued with great power on be-

half of the crown, which seemed to think at the time that the whole case depended on getting this one particular man into the jury box, that the recalcitrant juryman was not in truth a butcher, that he was only a dealer in meat, and that though the stain of the blood descended the cruelty did not. Fenwick remained there till he heard the case given against the pseudo-butcher, and then retired from the court. He had, however, just seen Carry Brattle and her father seated side by side on a bench in a little outside room appropriated to the witnesses, and there had been a constable there seeming to stand on guard over them. The miller was sitting, leaning on his stick, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and Carry was pale, wretched, and draggled. Sam had not yet made his appearance.

"I'm afeard, sir, he'll be in trouble," said Carry to the Vicar.

"Let 'un alone," said the miller; "when they wants 'im he'll be here. He know'd more about it nor I did."

That afternoon Fenwick went to the club of which he and Gilmore were both members, and found that his friend was in London. He had been so, at least, that morning at nine o'clock. According to the porter at the club door, Mr. Gilmore called there every morning for his letters, as soon as the club was open. He did not eat his breakfast in the house, nor, as far as the porter's memory went, did he even enter the club. Fenwick had lodged himself at an hotel in the immediate neighbourhood of Pall-Mall, and he made up his mind that his only chance of catching his friend was to be at the steps of the club door when it was opened at nine o'clock. So he eat his dinner,—very much in solitude, for on the 28th of August it is not often

that the coffee rooms of clubs are full,—and in the evening took himself to one of the theatres which was still open. His club had been deserted, and it had seemed to him that the streets also were empty. One old gentleman, who, together with himself, had employed the forces of the establishment that evening, had told him that there wasn't a single soul left in London. He had gone to his tailor's and had found that both the tailor and the foreman were out of town. His publisher,—for our Vicar did a little in the way of light literature on social subjects, and had brought out a pretty volume in green and gold on the half-profit system, intending to give his share to a certain county hospital,—his publisher had been in the north since the 12th, and would not be back for three weeks. He found, however, a confidential young man who was able to tell him that the hospital need not increase the number of its wards on this occasion. He had dropped down to Dean's Yard to see a clerical friend,—but the house was shut up and he could not even get an answer. He sauntered into the Abbey, and found them mending the organ. He got into a cab and was driven hither and thither because all the streets were pulled up. He called at the War-Office to see a young clerk, and found one old messenger fast asleep in his arm-chair. "Gone for his holiday, sir," said the man in the arm-chair, speaking amidst his dreams, without waiting to hear the particular name of the young clerk who was wanted. And yet, when he got to the theatre, it was so full that he could hardly find a seat on which to sit. In all the world around us there is nothing more singular than the emptiness and the fullness of London.

He was up early the next morning and breakfasted

before he went out, thinking that even should he succeed in catching the Squire, he would not be able to persuade the unhappy man to come and breakfast with him. At a little before nine he was in Pall-Mall, walking up and down before the club, and as the clocks struck the hour he began to be impatient. The porter had said that Gilmore always came exactly at nine, and within two minutes after that hour the Vicar began to feel that his friend was breaking an engagement and behaving badly to him. By ten minutes past, the idea had got into his head that all the people in Pall-Mall were watching him, and at the quarter he was angry and unhappy. He had just counted the seconds up to twenty minutes, and had begun to consider that it would be absurd for him to walk there all the day, when he saw the Squire coming slowly along the street. He had been afraid to make himself comfortable within the club, and there to wait for his friend's coming, lest Gilmore should have escaped him, not choosing to be thus caught by any one;—and even now he had his fear lest his quarry should slip through his fingers. He waited till the Squire had gone up to the porter and returned to the street, and then he crossed over and seized him by the arm. "Harry," he said, "you didn't expect to see me in London;—did you?"

"Certainly not," said the other, implying very plainly by his looks that the meeting had given him no special pleasure.

"I came up yesterday afternoon, and I was at Cutcote's the tailor's, and at Messrs. Bringémout and Neversell's. Bringémout has retired, but it's Neversell that does the business. And then I went down to see old Drybird, and I called on young Dozey at his office. But everybody is out of town. I never saw anything

like it. I vote that we take to having holidays in the country, and all come to London, and live in the empty houses."

"I suppose you came up to look after me?" said Gilmore, with a brow as black as a thunder-cloud.

Fenwick perceived that he need not carry on any further his lame pretences. "Well, I did. Come, old fellow, this won't do, you know. Everything is not to be thrown overboard because a girl doesn't know her own mind. Aren't your anchors better than that?"

"I haven't an anchor left," said Gilmore.

"How can you be so weak and so wicked as to say so? Come, Harry, take a turn with me in the park. You may be quite sure I shan't let you go now I've got you."

"You'll have to let me go," said the other.

"Not till I've told you my mind. Everybody is out of town, so I suppose even a parson may light a cigar down here. Harry, you must come back with me."

"No;—I cannot."

"Do you mean to say that you will yield up all your strength, all your duty, all your life, and throw over every purpose of your existence because you have been ill-used by a wench? Is that your idea of manhood,—of that manhood you have so often preached?"

"After what I have suffered there I cannot bear the place."

"You must force yourself to bear it. Do you mean to say that because you are unhappy you will not pay your debts?"

"I owe no man a shilling;—or, if I do, I will pay it to-morrow."

"There are debts you can only settle by daily pay-

ments. To every man living on your land you owe such a debt. To every friend connected with you by name, blood, or love, you owe such a debt. Do you suppose that you can cast yourself adrift, and make yourself a by-word, and hurt no one but yourself? Why is it that we hate a suicide?"

"Because he sins."

"Because he is a coward, and runs away from the burden which he ought to bear gallantly. He throws his load down on the roadside, and does not care who may bear it, or who may suffer because he is too poor a creature to struggle on! Have you no feeling that, though it may be hard with you here,"—and the Vicar, as he spoke, struck his breast,—"you should so carry your outer self, that the eyes of those around you should see nothing of the sorrow within? That is my idea of manliness, and I have ever taken you to be a man."

"We work for the esteem of others while we desire it. I desire nothing now. She has so knocked me about that I should be a liar if I were to say that there is enough manhood left in me to bear it. I shan't kill myself."

"No, Harry, you won't do that."

"But I shall give up the place, and go abroad."

"Whom will you serve by that?"

"It is all very well to preach, Frank. Bad as I am I could preach to you if there were a matter to preach about. I don't know that there is anything much easier than preaching. But as for practising, you can't do it if you have not got the strength. A man can't walk if you take away his legs. If you break a bird's wing he can't fly, let the bird be ever so full of pluck. All that there was in me she has taken out of me. I

could fight him, and would willingly, if I thought there was a chance of his meeting me."

"He would not be such a fool."

"But I could not stand up and look at her."

"She has left Bullhampton, you know."

"It does not matter, Frank. There is the place that I was getting ready for her. And if I were there, you and your wife would always be thinking about it. And every fellow about the estate knows the whole story. It seems to me to be almost inconceivable that a woman should have done such a thing."

"She has not meant to act badly, Harry."

"To tell the truth, when I look back at it all, I blame myself more than her. A man should never be ass enough to ask any woman a second time. But I had got it into my head that it was a disgraceful thing to ask and not to have. It is that which kills me now. I do not think that I will ever again attempt anything, because failure is so hard for me to bear. At any rate, I won't go back to the Privets." This he added after a pause, during which the Vicar had been thinking what new arguments he could bring up to urge his friend's return.

Fenwick learned that Gilmore had sent a cheque to his bailiff by the post of the preceding night. He acknowledged that in sending the cheque he had said no more than to bid the man pay what wages were due. He had not as yet made up his mind as to any further steps. As they walked round the enclosure of St. James's Park together, and as the warmth of their old friendship produced freedom of intercourse, Gilmore acknowledged a dozen wild schemes that had passed through his brain. That to which he was most wedded was a plan for meeting Walter Marrable and

cudgelling him pretty well to death. Fenwick pointed out three or four objections to this. In the first place, Marrable had committed no offence whatever against Gilmore. And then, in all probability, Marrable might be as good at cudgelling as the Squire himself. And thirdly, when the cudgelling was over, the man who began the row would certainly be put into prison, and in atonement for that would receive no public sympathy. "You can't throw yourself on the public pity as a woman might," said the Vicar.

"D—— the public pity," said the Squire, who was not often driven to make his language forcible after that fashion.

Another scheme was that he would publish the whole transaction. And here again his friend was obliged to remind him, that a man in his position should be reticent rather than outspoken. "You have already declared," said the Vicar, "that you can't endure failure, and yet you want to make your failure known to all the world." His third proposition was more absurd still. He would write such a letter to Mary Lowther as would cover her head with red-hot coals. He would tell her that she had made the world utterly unbearable to him, and that she might have the Privets for herself and go and live there. "I do not doubt but that such a letter would annoy her," said the Vicar.

"Why should I care how much she is annoyed?"

"Just so;—but everyone who saw the letter would know that it was pretence and bombast. Of course you will do nothing of the kind."

They were together pretty nearly the whole day. Gilmore, no doubt, would have avoided the Vicar in the morning had it been possible; but now that he

had been caught, and had been made to undergo his friend's lectures, he was rather grateful than otherwise for something in the shape of society. It was Fenwick's desire to induce him to return to Bullhampton. If this could not be done, it would no doubt be well that some authority should be obtained from him as to the management of the place. But this subject had not been mooted as yet, because Fenwick felt that if he once acknowledged that the runaway might continue to be a runaway, his chance of bringing the man back to his own home would be much lessened. As yet, however, he had made no impression in that direction. At last they parted on an understanding that they were to breakfast together the next morning at Fenwick's hotel, and then go to the eleven o'clock Sunday service at a certain noted metropolitan church. At breakfast and during the walk to church, Fenwick said not a word to his friend about Bullhampton. He talked of church services, of ritual, of the quietness of a Sunday in London, and of the Sunday occupations of three millions of people not a fourth of whom attend divine service. He chose any subject other than that of which Gilmore was thinking. But as soon as they were out of church he made another attack upon him. "After that, Harry, don't you feel like trying to do your duty?"

"I feel that I can't fly because my wing is broken," said the Squire.

They spent the whole of the afternoon and evening together, but no good was done. Gilmore, as far as he had a plan, intended to go abroad, travel to the East, or to the West,—or to the South, if so it came about. The Privets might be let if any would choose to take the place. As far as he was concerned his in-

come from his tenants would be more than he wanted. "As for doing them any good, I never did them any good," he said, as he parted from the Vicar for the night. "If they can't live on the land without my being at home, I am sure they won't if I stay there."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE TRIAL

The miller, as he was starting from his house door, had called his daughter by her own name for the first time since her return home,—and Carry had been comforted. But no further comfort came to her during her journey to Salisbury from her father's speech. He hardly spoke the whole morning, and when he did say a word as to any matter on the work they had in hand, his voice was low and melancholy. Carry knew well, as did every one at Bullhampton, that her father was a man not much given to conversation, and she had not expected him to talk to her; but the silence, together with the load at her heart as to the ordeal of her examination, was very heavy on her. If she could have asked questions, and received encouragement, she could have borne her position comparatively with ease.

The instructions with which the miller was furnished required that Carry Brattle should present herself at a certain office in Salisbury at a certain hour on that Wednesday. Exactly at that hour she and her father were at the place indicated, already having visited their lodgings at Mrs. Stiggs's. They were then told that they would not be again wanted on that day, but that they must infallibly be in the Court the next morning at half-past nine. The attorney's clerk whom they saw, when he learned that Sam Brattle was not yet in Salisbury, expressed an opinion as to that young man's iniquity which led Carry to think that he was certainly

in more danger than either of the prisoners. As they left the office, she suggested to her father that a message should be immediately sent to Bullhampton after Sam. "Let 'un be," said the miller; and it was all that he did say. On that evening they retired to the interior of one of the bedrooms at Trotter's Buildings, at four o'clock in the afternoon, and did not leave the house again. Anything more dreary than those hours could not be imagined. The miller, who was accustomed to work hard all day and then to rest, did not know what to do with his limbs. Carry, seeing his misery, and thinking rather of that than of her own, suggested to him that they should go out and walk round the town. "Bide as thee be," said the miller; "it ain't no time now for showing theeself." Carry took the rebuke without a word, but turned her head to hide her tears.

And the next day was worse, because it was longer. Exactly at half-past nine they were down at the court; and there they hung about till half-past ten. Then they were told that the affair would not be brought on till the Friday, but that at half-past nine on that day it would undoubtedly be commenced; and that if Sam was not there then, it would go very hard with Sam. The miller, who was beginning to lose his respect for the young man from whom he received these communications, muttered something about Sam being all right. "You'll find he won't be all right if he isn't here at half-past nine to-morrow," said the young man. "There is them as their bark is worse than their bite," said the miller. Then they went back to Trotter's Buildings, and did not stir outside of Mrs. Stiggs's house throughout the whole day.

On the Friday, which was in truth to be the day of

the trial, they were again in court at half-past nine; and there, as we have seen, they were found, two hours later, by Mr. Fenwick, waiting patiently while the great preliminary affair of the dealer in meat was being settled. At that hour Sam had not made his appearance; but between twelve and one he sauntered into the comfortless room in which Carry was still sitting with her father. The sight of him was a joy to poor Carry, as he would speak to her, and tell her something of what was going on. "I'm about in time for the play, father," he said, coming up to them. The miller picked up his hat, and scratched his head, and muttered something. But there had been a sparkle in his eye when he saw Sam. In truth, the sight in all the world most agreeable to the old man's eyes was the figure of his youngest son. To the miller no Apollo could have been more perfect in beauty, and no Hercules more useful in strength. Carry's sweet woman's brightness had once been as dear to him,—but all that had now passed away.

"Is it a-going all through?" asked the miller, referring to the mill.

"Running as pretty as a coach-and-four when I left, at seven this morning," said Sam.

"And how did thee come?"

"By the marrow-bone stage, as don't pay no tolls; how else?" The miller did not express a single word of approbation, but he looked up and down at his son's legs and limbs, delighted to think that the young man was at work at the mill this morning, had since that walked seventeen miles, and now stood before them showing no sign of fatigue.

"What are they a-doing on now, Sam?" asked Carry, in a whisper. Sam had already been into the

court, and was able to inform them that the "big swell of all was making a speech, in which he was telling everybody every 'varsal thing about it. And what do you think, father?"

"I don't think nothing," said the miller.

"They've been and found Trumbull's money-box buried in old mother Burrows's garden at Pycroft." Carry uttered the slightest possible scream as she heard this, thinking of the place which she had known so well. "Dash my buttons if they ain't," continued Sam. "It's about up with 'em now."

"They'll be hung—of course," said the miller.

"What asses men is," said Sam; "—to go to bury the box there! Why didn't they smash it into atoms?"

"Them as goes crooked in big things is like to go crooked in little," said the miller.

At about two, Sam and Carry were told to go into Court, and way was made for the old man to accompany them. At that moment the cross-examination was being continued of the man who, early on the Sunday morning, had seen the Grinder with his companion in the cart on the road leading towards Pycroft Common. A big burly barrister, with a broad forehead and grey eyes, was questioning this witness as to the identity of the men in the cart; and at every answer that he received he turned round to the jury as though he would say, "There, then, what do you think of the case now, when such a man as that is brought before you to give evidence?" "You will swear, then, that these two men who are here in the dock were the two men you saw that morning in the cart?" The witness said that he would so swear. "You knew them both before, of course?" The witness declared that he had never seen either of them before in his life. "And

you expect the jury to believe, now that the lives of these men depend on their believing it, that after the lapse of a year you can identify these two men, whom you had never seen before, and who were at that time being carried along the road at the rate of eight or ten miles an hour?" The witness, who had already encountered a good many of these questions, and who was inclined to be rough rather than timid, said that he didn't care twopence what the jury believed. It was simply his business to tell what he knew. Then the judge looked at that wicked witness,—who had talked in this wretched, jeering way about twopence!—looked at him over his spectacles, and shaking his head as though with pity at that witness's wickedness, cautioned him as to the peril of his body, making, too, a marked reference to the peril of his soul by that melancholy wagging of the head. Then the burly barrister with the broad forehead looked up beseechingly to the jury. Was it right that any man should be hung for any offence against whom such a witness as this was brought up to give testimony? It was the manifest feeling of the crowd in the court that the witness himself ought to be hung immediately. "You may go down, sir," said the burly barrister, giving an impression to those who looked on, but did not understand, that the case was over as far as it depended on that man's evidence. The burly barrister himself was not so sanguine. He knew very well that the judge who had wagged his head in so melancholy a way at the iniquity of the witness who had dared to say that he didn't care twopence, would, when he was summing up, refer to the presence of the two prisoners in the cart as a thing fairly supported by evidence. The amount of the burly barrister's achievement was simply this,—

that for the moment a sort of sympathy was excited on behalf of the prisoners by the disapprobation which was aroused against the wicked man who hadn't cared twopence. Sympathy, like electricity, will run so quick that no man may stop it. If sympathy might be made to run through the jury-box, there might perchance be a man or two there weak enough to entertain it to the prejudice of his duty on that day. The hopes of the burly barrister in this matter did not go further than that.

Then there was another man put forward who had seen neither of the prisoners, but had seen the cart and pony at Pycroft Common, and had known that the cart and pony were for the time in the possession of the Grinder. He was questioned by the burly barrister about himself rather than about his evidence; and when he had been made to own that he had been five times in prison, the burly barrister was almost justified in the look he gave to the jury, and he shook his head as though in sorrow that his learned friend on the other side should have dared to bring such a man as that before them as a witness.

Various others were brought up and examined before poor Carry's turn had come; and on each occasion, as one after another was dismissed from the hands of the burly barrister, here one crushed and confounded, there another loud and triumphant, her heart was almost in her throat. And yet, though she so dreaded the moment when it should come, there was a sense of wretched disappointment in that she was kept waiting. It was now between four and five, and whispers began to be rife that the Crown would not finish their case that day. There was much trouble and more amusement with the old woman who had been Trumbull's

housekeeper. She was very deaf; but it had been discovered that there was an old friendship between her and the Grinder's mother, and that she had at one time whispered the fact of the farmer's money into the ears of Mrs. Burrows of Pycroft Common. Deaf as she was, she was made to admit this. Mrs. Burrows was also examined, but she would admit nothing. She had never heard of the money, or of Farmer Trumbull, or of the murder,—not till the world heard of it, and she knew nothing about her son's doings or comings or goings. No doubt she had given shelter to a young woman at the request of a friend of her son, the young woman paying her ten shillings a week for her board and lodging. That young woman was Carry Brattle. Her son and that young man had certainly been at her house together; but she could not at all say whether they had been there on that Sunday morning. Perhaps, of all who had been examined, Mrs. Burrows was the most capable witness, for the lawyer who examined her on behalf of the Crown was able to extract absolutely nothing from her. When she turned herself round with an air of satisfaction, to face the questions of the burly barrister, she was told that he had no question to ask her. "It's all as one to me, sir," said Mrs. Burrows, as she smoothed her apron and went down.

And then it was poor Carry's turn. When the name of Caroline Brattle was called, she turned her eyes beseechingly to her father, as though hoping that he would accompany her in this the dreaded moment of her punishment. She caught him convulsively by the sleeve of the coat, as she was partly dragged and partly shoved on towards the little box in which she was to take her stand. He accompanied her to the foot of the

two or three steps which she was called on to descend, but of course he could go no further with her.

"I'll bide nigh thee, Carry," he said; and it was the only word which he had spoken to comfort her that day. It did, however, serve to lessen her present misery, and added something to her poor stock of courage. "Your name is Caroline Brattle?" "And you were living on the thirty-first of last August with Mrs. Burrows at Pycroft Common?" "Do you remember Sunday, the thirty-first of August?" These, and two or three other questions like them, were asked by a young barrister in the mildest tone he could assume. "Speak out, Miss Brattle," he said, "and then there will be nothing to trouble you."

"Yes, sir," she said, in answer to each of the questions, still almost in a whisper.

Nothing to trouble her, and all the eyes of that cruel world around fixed upon her! Nothing to trouble her, and every ear on the alert to hear her,—young and pretty as she was,—confess her own shame in that public court! Nothing to trouble her, when she would so willingly have died to escape the agony that was coming on her! For she knew that it would come. Though she had never been in a court of law before, and had no one to tell her what would happen, she knew that the question would be asked. She was sure that she would be made to say what she had been before all that crowd of men.

The evidence which she could give, though it was material, was very short. John Burrows and Lawrence Acorn had come to the cottage on Pycroft Common on that Sunday morning, and there she had seen both of them. It was daylight when they came, but still it was very early. She had not observed the clock, but

she thought that it may have been about five. The men were in and out of the house, but they had some breakfast. She had risen from bed to help to get them their breakfast. If anything had been buried by them in the garden, she had known nothing of it. She had then received three sovereigns from Acorn, whom she was engaged to marry. From that day to the present she had never seen either of the men. As soon as she heard of the suspicion against Acorn, and that he had fled, she conceived her engagement to be at an end. All this she testified, with infinite difficulty, in so low a voice that a man was sworn to stand by her and repeat her answers aloud to the jury;—and then she was handed over to the burly barrister.

She had been long enough in the court to perceive, and had been clever enough to learn, that this man would be her enemy. Though she had been unable to speak aloud in answering the counsel for the prosecution, she had quite understood that the man was her friend,—that he was only putting to her those questions which must be asked,—and questions which she could answer without much difficulty. But when she was told to attend to what the other gentleman would say to her, then, indeed, her poor heart failed her.

It came at once. "My dear, I believe you have been indiscreet?" The words, perhaps, had been chosen with some idea of mercy, but certainly there was no mercy in the tone. The man's voice was loud, and there was something in it almost of a jeer,—something which seemed to leave an impression on the hearer that there had been pleasure in the asking it. She struggled to make an answer, and the monosyllable, yes, was formed by her lips. The man who was acting as her mouthpiece stooped down his ears to her lips,

and then shook his head. Assuredly no sound had come from them that could have reached his sense, had he been ever so close. The burly barrister waited in patience, looking now at her, and now round at the court. "I must have an answer. I say that I believe you have been indiscreet. You know, I dare say, what I mean. Yes or no will do; but I must have an answer." She glanced round for an instant, trying to catch her father's eye; but she could see nothing; everything seemed to swim before her except the broad face of that burly barrister. "Has she given any answer?" he asked of the mouthpiece; and the mouthpiece again shook his head. The heart of the mouthpiece was tender, and he was beginning to hate the burly barrister. "My dear," said the burly barrister, "the jury must have the information from you."

Then gradually there was heard through the court the gurgling sounds of irrepressible sobs,—and with them there came a moan from the old man, who was only divided from his daughter by the few steps,—which was understood by the whole crowd. The story of the poor girl, in reference to the trial, had been so noised about that it was known to all the listeners. That spark of sympathy, of which we have said that its course cannot be arrested when it once finds its way into a crowd, had been created, and there was hardly present then one, either man or woman, who would not have prayed that Carry Brattle might be spared if it were possible. There was a juryman there, a father with many daughters, who thought that it might not misbecome him to put forward such a prayer himself.

"Perhaps it mayn't be necessary," said the soft-hearted juryman.

But the burly barrister was not a man who liked to be taught his duty by anyone in court,—not even by a juryman,—and his quick intellect immediately told him that he must seize the spark of sympathy in its flight. It could not be stopped, but it might be turned to his own purpose. It would not suffice for him now that he should simply defend the question he had asked. The court was showing its aptitude for pathos, and he also must be pathetic on his own side. He knew well enough that he could not arrest public opinion which was going against him, by showing that his question was a proper question; but he might do so by proving at once how tender was his own heart.

"It is a pain and grief to me," said he, "to bring sorrow upon anyone. But look at those prisoners at the bar, whose lives are committed to my charge, and know that I, as their advocate, love them while they are my clients as well as any father can love his child. I will spend myself for them, even though it may be at the risk of the harsh judgment of those around me. It is my duty to prove to the jury on their behalf that the life of this young woman has been such as to invalidate her testimony against them;—and that duty I shall do, fearless of the remarks of anyone. Now I ask you again, Caroline Brattle, whether you are not one of the unfortunates?"

This attempt of the burly barrister was to a certain extent successful. The juryman who had daughters of his own had been put down, and the barrister had given, at any rate, an answer to the attack that had been silently made on him by the feeling of the court. Let a man be ready with a reply, be it ever so bad a reply, and any attack is parried. But Carry had given no answer to the question, and those who looked at

her thought it very improbable that she would be able to do so. She had clutched the arm of the man who stood by her, and in the midst of her sobs was looking round with snatched, quick, half-completed glances for protection to the spot on which her father and brother were standing. The old man had moaned once; but after that he uttered no sound. He stood leaning on his stick, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, quite motionless. Sam was standing with his hands grasping the woodwork before him, and his bold gaze fastened on the barrister's face, as though he were about to fly at him. The burly barrister saw it all, and perceived that more was to be gained by sparing than by persecuting this witness, and resolved to let her go.

"I believe that will do," he said. "Your silence tells all that I wish the jury to know. You may go down." Then the man who had acted as mouthpiece led Carry away, delivered her up to her father, and guided them both out of court.

They went back to the room in which they had before been seated, and there they waited for Sam, who was called into the witness-box as they left the court.

"Oh, father," said Carry, as soon as the old man was again placed upon the bench. And she stood over him, and put her hand upon his neck.

"We've won through it, girl, and let that be enough," said the miller. Then she sat down close by his side, and not another word was spoken by them till Sam returned.

Sam's evidence was, in fact, but of little use. He had had dealings with Acorn, who had introduced him to Burrows, and had known the two men at the old woman's cottage on the Common. When he was asked

what these dealings had been, he said they were honest dealings.

"About your sister's marriage?" suggested the Crown lawyer.

"Well,—yes," said Sam. And then he stated that the men had come over to Bullhampton and that he had accompanied them as they walked round Farmer Trumbull's house. He had taken them into the Vicar's garden; and then he gave an account of the meeting there with Mr. Fenwick. After that he had known and seen nothing of the men. When he testified so far he was handed over to the burly barrister.

The burly barrister tried all he knew, but he could make nothing of this witness. A question was asked him, the true answer to which would have implied that his sister's life had been disreputable. When this was asked, Sam declared that he would not say a word about his sister, one way or the other. His sister had told them all she knew about the murder, and now he had told them all he knew. He protested that he was willing to answer any questions they might ask him about himself; but about his sister he would answer none. When told that the information desired might be got in a more injurious way from other sources, he became rather impudent.

"Then you may go to—other sources," he said.

He was threatened with all manner of pains and penalties; but he made nothing of these threats, and was at last allowed to leave the box. When his evidence was completed, the trial was adjourned for another day.

Though it was then late in the afternoon, the three Brattles returned home that night. There was a train which took them to the Bullhampton Road station, and

from thence they walked to the mill. It was a weary journey, both for the poor girl and for the old man; but anything was better than delay for another night in Trotter's Buildings. And then the miller was unwilling to be absent from his mill one hour longer than was necessary. When there came to be a question whether he could walk, he laughed the difficulty to scorn in his quiet way. "Why shouldn't I walk it? Ain't I got to 'arn my bread every day?"

It was ten o'clock when they reached the mill, and Mrs. Brattle, not expecting them at that hour, was in bed. But Fanny was up, and did what she could to comfort them. But no one could ever comfort old Brattle. He was not susceptible to soft influences. It may almost be said that he condemned himself because he gave way to the daily luxury of a pipe. He believed in plenty of food, because food for the workman is as coals to the steam-engine, as oats to the horse,—the raw material out of which the motive power of labour must be made. Beyond eating and working a man had little to do, but just to wait till he died. That was his theory of life in these his latter days; and yet he was a man with keen feelings and a loving heart.

But Carry was comforted when her sister's arms were around her. "They asked me if I was bad," she said, "and I thought I should 'a' died, and I never answered them a word,—and at last they let me go." When Fanny inquired whether their father had been kind to her, she declared that he had been "main kind." "But, oh, Fanny! if he'd only say a word, it would warm one's heart; wouldn't it?"

On the following evening news reached Bullhampton that the Grinder had been convicted and sentenced to death, but that Lawrence Acorn had been acquitted.

The judge, in his summing up, had shown that certain evidence which applied to the Grinder had not applied to his comrade in the dock, and the jury had been willing to take any excuse for saving one man from the halter.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FATE OF THE PUDDLEHAMITES

Fenwick and Gilmore breakfasted together on the morning that the former left London for Bullhampton; and by that time the Vicar had assured himself that it would be quite impossible to induce his friend to go back to his home. "I shall turn up after some years, if I live," said the Squire; "and I suppose I shan't think so much about it then; but for the present I will not go to the place."

He authorised Fenwick to do what he pleased about the house and gardens, and promised to give instructions as to the sale of his horses. If the whole place were not let, the bailiff might, he suggested, carry on the farm himself. When he was urged as to his duty, he again answered by his illustration of the man without a leg. "It may be all very true," he said, "that a man ought to walk, but if you cut off his leg he can't walk." Fenwick at last found that there was nothing more to be said, and he was constrained to take his leave.

"May I tell her that you forgive her?" the Vicar asked, as they were walking together up and down the station in the Waterloo Road.

"She will not care a brass farthing for my forgiveness," said Gilmore.

"You wrong her there. I am sure that nothing would give her so much comfort as such a message."

Gilmore walked half the length of the platform before he replied.

"What is the good of telling a lie about it?" he said, at last.

"I certainly would not tell a lie."

"Then I can't say that I forgive her. How is a man to forgive such treatment? If I said that I did, you wouldn't believe me. I will keep out of her way, and that will be better for her than forgiving her."

"Some of your wrath, I fear, falls to my lot," said the Vicar.

"No, Frank. You and your wife have done the best for me all through,—as far as you thought was best."

"We have meant to do so."

"And if she has been false to me as no woman was ever false before, that is not your fault. As for the jewels, tell your wife to lock them up,—or to throw them away, if she likes that better. My brother's wife will have them some day, I suppose." Now, his brother was in India, and his brother's wife he had never seen. Then there was a pledge given that Gilmore would inform his friend by letter of his future destination, and so they parted.

This was on the Tuesday, and Fenwick had desired that his gig might meet him at the Bullhampton Road station. He had learned by this time of the condemnation of one man for the murder, and the acquittal of the other, and was full of the subject when his groom was seated beside him. Had the Brattles come back to the mill? And what of Sam? And what did the people say about Acorn's escape? These, and many other questions, he asked, but he found that his servant was so burdened with a matter of separate and of infinitely greater interest, that he could not be got to give his

mind to the late trial. He believed the Brattles were back; he had seen nothing of Sam; he didn't know anything about Acorn; but the new chapel was going to be pulled down.

"What!" exclaimed the Vicar;—"not at once?"

"So they was saying, sir, when I come away. And the men was at it,—that is, standing all about it. And there is to be no more preaching, sir. And missus was out in the front looking at 'em as I drove out of the yard."

Fenwick asked twenty questions, but could obtain no other information than was given in the first announcement of these astounding news. And as he entered the Vicarage he was still asking questions, and the man was still endeavouring to express his own conviction that that horrible, damnable, and most heart-breaking red-brick building would be demolished, and carted clean away before the end of the week. For the servants and dependents of the Vicarage were staunch to the interests of the church establishment, with a degree of fervour of which the Vicar himself knew nothing. They hated Puddleham and dissent. This groom would have liked nothing better than a commission to punch the head of Mr. Puddleham's eldest son, a young man who had been employed in a banker's office at Warminster, but had lately come home because he had been found to have a taste for late hours and public-house parlours; and had made himself busy on the question of the chapel. The maid servants at the Vicarage looked down as from a mighty great height on the young women of Bullhampton who attended the chapel, and the Vicarage gardener, since he had found out that the chapel stood on glebe land, and ought, therefore, to be placed under his hands, had hardly been

able to keep himself off the ground. His proposed cure for the evil that had been done,—as an immediate remedy before erection and demolition could be carried out, was to form the Vicarage manure-pit close against the chapel door,—"and then let anybody touch our property who dares!" He had, however, been too cautious to carry out any such strategy as this, without direct authority from the Commander-in-Chief. "Master thinks a deal too much on 'em," he had said to the groom, almost in disgust at the Vicar's pusillanimity.

When Fenwick reached his own gate there was a crowd of men loitering around the chapel, and he got out from his gig and joined them. His eye first fell upon Mr. Puddleham, who was standing directly in front of the door, with his back to the building, wearing on his face an expression of infinite displeasure. The Vicar was desirous of assuring the minister that no steps need be taken, at any rate, for the present, towards removing the chapel from its present situation. But before he could speak to Mr. Puddleham, he perceived the builder from Salisbury, who appeared to be very busy,—Grimes, the Bullhampton tradesman, so lately discomfited, but now triumphant,—Bolt, the elder, close at Mr. Puddleham's elbow,—his own churchwarden, with one or two other farmers,—and, lastly, Lord St. George himself, walking in company with Mr. Packer, the agent. Many others from the village were there, so that there was quite a public meeting on the bit of ground which had been appropriated to Mr. Puddleham's preachings. Fenwick, as soon as he saw Lord St. George, accosted him before he spoke to the others.

"My friend, Mr. Puddleham," said he, "seems to

have the benefit of a distinguished congregation this morning."

"The last, I fear, he will ever have on this spot," said the lord, as he shook hands with the Vicar.

"I am very sorry to hear you say so, my lord. Of course, I don't know what you are doing, and I can't make Mr. Puddleham preach here if he be not willing."

Mr. Puddleham had now joined them. "I am ready and willing," said he, "to do my duty in that sphere of life to which it has pleased God to call me." And it was evident that he thought that the sphere to which he had been called was that special chapel opposite to the Vicarage entrance.

"As I was saying," continued the Vicar, "I have neither the wish nor the power to control my neighbour; but, as far as I am concerned, no step need be taken to displace him. I did not like this site for the chapel at first; but I have got quit of all that feeling, and Mr. Puddleham may preach to his heart's content, —as he will, no doubt, to his hearers' welfare, and will not annoy me in the least." On hearing this, Mr. Puddleham pushed his hat off his forehead and looked up and frowned, as though the levity of expression in which his rival indulged was altogether unbecoming the solemnity of the occasion.

"Mr. Fenwick," said the lord, "we have taken advice, and we find the thing ought to be done,—and to be done instantly. The leading men of the congregation are quite of that view."

"They are of course unwilling to oppose your noble father, my lord," said the minister.

"And to tell you the truth, Mr. Fenwick," continued Lord St. George, "you might be put, most unjustly,

into a peck of troubles if we did not do this. You have no right to let the glebe on a building lease, even if you were willing, and high ecclesiastical authority would call upon you at once to have the nuisance removed."

"Nuisance, my lord!" said Mr. Puddleham, who had seen with half an eye that the son was by no means worthy of the father.

"Well, yes,—placed in the middle of the Vicar's ground! What would you say if Mr. Fenwick demanded leave to use your parlour for his vestry-room, and to lock up his surplice in your cupboard?"

"I'm sure he'd try it on before he'd had it a day," said the Vicar, "and very well he'd look in it," whereupon the minister again raised his hat, and again frowned.

"The long and the short of it is," continued the lord, "that we've, among us, made a most absurd mistake, and the sooner we put it right the better. My father, feeling that our mistake has led to all the others, and that we have caused all this confusion, thinks it to be his duty to pull the chapel down and build it up on the site before proposed near the cross roads. We'll begin at once, and hope to get it done by Christmas. In the meantime, Mr. Puddleham has consented to go back to the old chapel."

"Why not let him stay here till the other is finished?" asked the Vicar.

"My dear sir," replied the lord, "we are going to transfer the chapel, body and bones. If we were Yankees, we should know how to do it without pulling it in pieces. As it is, we've got to do it piecemeal. So now, Mr. Hickbody," he continued, turning round to the builder from Salisbury, "you may go to work at

once. The Marquis will be much obliged to you if you will press it on."

"Certainly, my lord," said Mr. Hickbody, taking off his hat. "We'll put on quite a body of men, my lord, and his lordship's commands shall be obeyed."

After which Lord St. George and Mr. Fenwick withdrew together from the chapel and walked into the Vicarage.

"If all that be absolutely necessary——" began the Vicar.

"It is, Mr. Fenwick; we've made a mistake." Lord St. George always spoke of his father as "we," when there came upon him the necessity of retrieving his father's errors. "And our only way out of it is to take the bull by the horns at once and put the thing right. It will cost us about £700, and then there is the bore of having to own ourselves to be wrong. But that is much better than a fight."

"I should not have fought."

"You would have been driven to fight. And then there is the one absolute fact;—the chapel ought not to be there. And now I've one other word to say. Don't you think this quarrelling between clergyman and landlord is bad for the parish?"

"Very bad, indeed, Lord St. George."

"Now, I'm not going to measure out censure, or to say that we have been wrong, or that you have been wrong."

"If you do, I shall defend myself," said the Vicar.

"Exactly so. But if bygones can be bygones, there need be neither offence nor defence."

"What can a clergyman think, Lord St. George, when the landlord of his parish writes letters against him to his Bishop, maligning his private character, and

spreading reports for which there is not the slightest foundation?"

"Mr. Fenwick, is that the way in which you let bygones be bygones?"

"It is very hard to say that I can forget such an injury."

"My father, at any rate, is willing to forget,—and, as he hopes, to forgive. In all disputes, each party of course thinks that he has been right. If you, for the sake of the parish, and for the sake of Christian charity and good-will, are ready to meet him half way, all this ill-will may be buried in the ground."

What could the Vicar do? He felt that he was being cunningly cheated out of his grievance. He would have had not a minute's hesitation as to forgiving the Marquis, had the Marquis owned himself to be wrong. But he was invited to bury the hatchet on even terms, and he knew that the terms should not be even. And he resented all this the more in his heart because he understood very well how clever and cunning was the son of his enemy. He did not like to be cheated out of his forgiveness. But, after all, what did it matter? Would it not be enough for him to know, himself, that he had been right? Was it not much to feel himself free from all pricks of conscience in the matter?

"If Lord Trowbridge is willing to let it all pass," said he, "so am I."

"I am delighted," said Lord St. George, with spirit; "I will not come in now, because I have already overstayed my time; but I hope you may hear from my father before long in a spirit of kindness."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE END OF MARY LOWTHER'S STORY

Sir Gregory Marrable's headache was not of long duration. Allusion is here made to that especial headache under the acute effects of which he had taken so very unpromising a farewell of his nephew and heir. It lasted, however, for two or three days, during which he had frequent consultations with Mrs. Brownlow, and had one conversation with Edith. He was disappointed, sorry, and sore at heart because the desire on which he had set his mind could not be fulfilled; but he was too weak to cling either to his hope or to his anger. His own son had gone from him, and this young man must be his heir and the owner of Dunripple. No doubt he might punish the young man by excluding him from any share of ownership for the present; but there would be neither comfort nor advantage in that. It is true that he might save any money that Walter would cost him, and give it to Edith,—but such a scheme of saving for such a purpose was contrary to the old man's nature. He wanted to have his heir near him at Dunripple. He hated the feeling of desolation which was presented to him by the idea of Dunripple without some young male Marrable at hand to help him. He desired, unconsciously, to fill up the void made by the death of his son with as little trouble as might be. And therefore he consulted Mrs. Brownlow.

Mrs. Brownlow was clearly of opinion that he had

better take his nephew, with the encumbrance of Mary Lowther, and make them both welcome to the house. "We have all heard so much good of Miss Lowther, you know," said Mrs. Brownlow, "and she is not at all the same as a stranger."

"That is true," said Sir Gregory, willing to be talked over.

"And then, you know, who can say whether Edith would ever have liked him or not. You never can tell what way a young woman's feelings will go."

On hearing this, Sir Gregory uttered some sound intended to express mildly a divergence of opinion. He did not doubt but what Edith would have been quite willing to fall in love with Walter, had all things been conformable to her doing so. Mrs. Brownlow did not notice this as she continued,—"At any rate, the poor girl would suffer dreadfully now if she were allowed to think that you should be divided from your nephew by your regard for her. Indeed, she could hardly stay at Dunripple if that were so."

Mrs. Brownlow in a mild way suggested that nothing should be said to Edith, and Sir Gregory gave half a promise that he would be silent. But it was against his nature not to speak. When the moment came the temptation to say something that could be easily said, and which would produce some mild excitement, was always too strong for him. "My dear," he said, one evening, when Edith was hovering round his chair, "you remember what I once said to you about your cousin Walter?"

"About Captain Marrable, uncle?"

"Well,—he is just the same as a cousin;—it turns out that he is engaged to marry another cousin,—Mary Lowther."

"She is his real cousin, Uncle Gregory."

"I never saw the young lady,—that I know of."

"Nor have I,—but I've heard so much about her! And everybody says she is nice. I hope they'll come and live here."

"I don't know yet, my dear."

"He told me all about it when he was here."

"Told you he was going to be married?"

"No, uncle, he did not tell me that exactly;—but he said that—that——. He told me how much he loved Mary Lowther, and a great deal about her, and I felt sure it would come so."

"Then you are aware that what I had hinted about you and Walter——"

"Don't talk about that, Uncle Gregory. I knew that it was ever so unlikely, and I didn't think about it. You are so good to me, that of course I couldn't say anything. But you may be sure he is ever so much in love with Miss Lowther; and I do hope we shall be so fond of her!"

Sir Gregory was pacified, and his headache for the time was cured. He had had his little scheme, and it had failed. Edith was very good, and she should still be his pet and his favourite,—but Walter Marrable should be told that he might marry and bring his bride to Dunripple, and that if he would sell out of his regiment, the family lawyer should be instructed to make such arrangements for him as would have been made had he actually been a son. There would be some little difficulty about the colonel's rights; but the colonel had already seized upon so much that it could not but be easy to deal with him. On the next morning the letter was written to Walter by Mrs. Brownlow herself.

About a week after this Mary Lowther, who was

waiting at Loring with an outward show of patience, but with much inward anxiety for further tidings from her lover, received two letters, one from Walter, and the other from her friend, Janet Fenwick. The reader shall see these, and the replies which Mary made to them, and then our whole story will have been told as far as the loves, and hopes, and cares, and troubles of Mary Lowther are concerned.

"Bullhampton, 1st September.

"Dearest Mary,

"I write a line just because I said I would. Frank went up to London last week and was away one Sunday. He found his poor friend in town and was with him for two or three days. He has made up his mind to let the Privets, and go abroad, and nothing that Frank could say would move him. I do not know whether it may not be for the best. We shall lose such a neighbour as we never shall have again. He was the same as a brother to both of us; and I can only say that, loving him like a brother, I endeavoured to do the best for him that I could. This I do know;—that nothing on earth shall ever tempt me to set my hand at match-making again. But it was alluring,—the idea of bringing my two dearest friends near me together.

"If you have anything to tell me of your happiness, I shall be delighted to hear it; I will not set my heart against this other man;—but you can hardly expect me to say that he will be as much to me as might have been that other. God bless you.

"Your most affectionate friend,

"Janet Fenwick.

"I must tell you the fate of the chapel. They are already pulling it down, and carting away the things

to the other place. They are doing it so quick, that it will all be gone before we know where we are. I own I am glad. As for Frank, I really believe he'd rather let it remain. But this is not all. The Marquis has promised that we shall hear from him 'in a spirit of kindness.' I wonder what this will come to? It certainly was not a spirit of kindness that made him write to the Bishop and call Frank an infidel."

And this was the other letter.

"Barracks, 1st September, 186—.

"DEAREST LOVE,

"I hope this will be one of the last letters I shall write from this abominable place, for I am going to sell out at once. It is all settled, and I'm to be a sort of deputy Squire at Dunripple, under my uncle. As that is to be my fate in life, I may as well begin it at once. But that's not the whole of my fate, nor the best of it. You are to be admitted as deputy Squiress,—or rather as Squiress in chief, seeing that you will be mistress of the house. Dearest Mary, may I hope that you won't object to the promotion?

"I have had a long letter from Mrs. Brownlow; and I ran over yesterday and saw my uncle. I was so hurried that I could not write from Dunripple. I would send you Mrs. Brownlow's letter, only perhaps it would not be quite fair. I dare say you will see it some day. She says ever so much about you, and as complimentary as possible. And then she declares her purpose to resign all rights, honours, pains, privileges, and duties as mistress of Dunripple into your hands as soon as you are Mrs. Marrable. And this she repeated yesterday with some stateliness, and a great deal of

high-minded resignation. But I don't mean to laugh at her, because I know she means to do what is right.

"My own, own Mary, write me a line instantly, to say that it is right,—and to say also that you agree with me that as it is to be done, 'twere well it were done quickly.

"Yours always, with all my heart,

"W. M."

It was of course necessary that Mary should consult with her aunt before she answered the second letter. Of that which she received from Mrs. Fenwick she determined to say nothing. Why should she ever mention to her aunt again a name so painful to her as that of Mr. Gilmore? The thinking of him could not be avoided. In this, the great struggle of her life, she had endeavoured to do right, and yet she could not acquit herself of evil. But the pain, though it existed, might at least be kept out of sight.

"And so you are to go and live at Dunripple at once?" said Miss Marrable.

"I suppose we shall."

"Ah, well! It's all right, I'm sure. Of course there is not a word to be said against it. I hope Sir Gregory won't die before the Colonel. That's all."

"The Colonel is his father, you know."

"I hope there may not come to be trouble about it, that's all. I shall be very lonely, but of course I had to expect that."

"You'll come to us, Aunt Sarah? You'll be as much there as here."

"Thank you, dear. I don't quite know about that. Sir Gregory is all very well; but one does like one's own house."

From all which Mary understood that her dear aunt still wished that she might have had her own way in disposing of her niece's hand,—as her dear friends at Bullhampton had wished to have theirs.

The following were the answers from Mary to the two letters given above:—

"Loring, 3rd September, 186—.

"DEAR JANET,

"I am very, very, very sorry. I do not know what more I can say. I meant to do well all through. When I first told Mr. Gilmore that it could not be as he wished, I was right. When I made up my mind that it must be so at last, I was right also. I fear I cannot say so much of myself as to that middle step which I took, thinking it was best to do as I was bidden. I meant to be right, but of course I was wrong, and I am very, very sorry. Nevertheless, I am much obliged to you for writing to me. Of course I cannot but desire to know what he does. If he writes and seems to be happy on his travels, pray tell me.

"I have much to tell you of my own happiness,—though, in truth, I feel a remorse at being happy when I have caused so much unhappiness. Walter is to sell out and live at Dunripple, and I also am to live there when we are married. I suppose it will not be long now. I am writing to him to-day, though I do not yet know what I shall say to him. Sir Gregory has assented, and arrangements are to be made, and lawyers are to be consulted, and we are to be what Walter calls deputy Squire and Squiress at Dunripple. Mrs. Brownlow and Edith Brownlow are still to live there, but I am to have the honour of ordering the dinner, and looking wise at the housekeeper. Of course I shall

feel very strange at going into such a house. To you I may say how much nicer it would be to go to some place that Walter and I could have to ourselves,—as you did when you married. But I am not such a simpleton as to repine at that. So much has gone as I would have it that I only feel myself to be happier than I deserve. What I shall chiefly look forward to will be your first visit to Dunripple.

"Your most affectionate friend,

"MARY LOWTHER."

The other letter, as to which Mary had declared that she had not as yet made up her own mind when she wrote to Mrs. Fenwick, was more difficult in composition.

"Loring, 2nd September, 186—.

"DEAREST WALTER,

"So it is all settled, and I am to be a deputy Squiress! I have no objection to urge. As long as you are the deputy Squire, I will be the deputy Squiress. For your sake, my dearest, I do most heartily rejoice that the affair is settled. I think you will be happier as a county gentleman than you would have been in the army; and as Dunripple must ultimately be your home,—I will say our home,—perhaps it is as well that you, and I also, should know it as soon as possible. Of course I am very nervous about Mrs. Brownlow and her daughter; but though nervous I am not fearful; and I shall prepare myself to like them.

"As to that other matter, I hardly know what answer to make on so very quick a questioning. It was only the other day that it was decided that it was to be; —and there ought to be breathing time before one also

decides when. But, dear Walter, I will do nothing to interfere with your prospects. Let me know what you think yourself; but remember, in thinking, that a little interval for purposes of sentiment and stitching is always desired by the weaker vessel on such an occasion.

"God bless you, my own one.

"Yours always and always, M. L.

"In real truth, I will do whatever you bid me."

Of course, after that, the marriage was not very long postponed. Walter Marrable allowed that some grace should be given for sentiment, and some also for stitching, but as to neither did he feel that any long delay was needed. A week for sentiment, and two more for the preparation of bridal adornments, he thought would be sufficient. There was a compromise at last, as is usual in such cases, and the marriage took place about the middle of October. No doubt, at that time of the year they went to Italy,—but of that the present narrator is not able to speak with any certainty. This, however, is certain,—that if they did travel abroad, Mary Marrable travelled in daily fear lest her unlucky fate should bring her face to face with Mr. Gilmore. Wherever they went, their tour, in accordance with a contract made by the baronet, was terminated within two months. For on Christmas Day Mrs. Walter Marrable was to take her place as mistress of the house at the dinner table.

The reader may, perhaps, desire to know whether things were made altogether smooth with the Colonel. On this matter, Messrs. Block and Curling, the family lawyers, encountered very much trouble indeed. The

Colonel, when application was made to him, was as sweet as honey. He would do anything for the interests of his dearest son. There did not breathe a father on earth who cared less for himself or his own position. But still he must live. He submitted to Messrs. Block and Curling whether it was not necessary that he should live. Messrs. Block and Curling explained to him very clearly that his brother, the baronet, had nothing to do with his living or dying,—and that towards his living he had already robbed his son of a large property. At last, however, he would not make over his life interest in the property, as it would come to him in the event of his brother dying before him, except on payment of an annuity on and from that date of £200 a year. He began by asking £500, and was then told that the Captain would run the chance and would sue his father for the £20,000 in the event of Sir Gregory dying before the Colonel.

Now the narrator will bid adieu to Mary Lowther, to Loring, and to Dunripple. The conduct of his heroine, as depicted in these pages, will, he fears, meet with the disapprobation of many close and good judges of female character. He has endeavoured to describe a young woman, prompted in all her doings by a conscience wide awake, guided by principle, willing, if need be, to sacrifice herself, struggling always to keep herself from doing wrong, but yet causing infinite grief to others, and nearly bringing herself to utter shipwreck, because, for a while, she allowed herself to believe that it would be right for her to marry a man whom she did not love.

CHAPTER XXXV

AT TURNOVER CASTLE

Mrs. Fenwick had many quips and quirks with her husband as to those tidings to be made in a pleasant spirit which were expected from Turnover Castle. From the very moment that Lord St. George had given the order,—upon the authority chiefly of the unfortunate Mr. Bolt, who on this occasion found it to be impossible to refuse to give an authority which a lord demanded from him,—the demolition of the building had been commenced. Before the first Sunday came any use of the new chapel for divine service was already impossible. On that day Mr. Puddleham preached a stirring sermon about tabernacles in general. "It did not matter where the people of the Lord met," he said, "so long as they did meet to worship the Lord in a proper spirit of independent resistance to any authority that had not come to them from revelation. Any hedge-side was a sufficient tabernacle for a devout Christian. But——," and then, without naming any name, he described the Church of England as a Upas tree which, by its poison, destroyed those beautiful flowers which strove to spring up amidst the rank grass beneath it and to make the air sweet within its neighbourhood. Something he said, too, of a weak sister tottering to its base, only to be followed in its ruin by the speedy prostration of its elder brother. All this was of course told in detail to the Vicar; but the Vicar refused even to be interested by it. "Of course he

did," said the Vicar. "If a man is to preach, what can he preach but his own views?"

The tidings to be made in a pleasant spirit were not long waited for,—or, at any rate, the first instalment of them. On the 2nd of September there arrived a large hamper full of partridges, addressed to Mrs. Fenwick in the Earl's own handwriting. "The very first fruits," said the Vicar, as he went down to inspect the plentiful provision thus made for the Vicarage larder. Well;—it was certainly better to have partridges from Turnover than accusations of immorality and infidelity. The Vicar so declared at once, but his wife would not at first agree with him. "I really should have such pleasure in packing them up and sending them back," said she.

"Indeed, you shall do nothing of the kind."

"The idea of a basket of birds to atone for such insults and calumny as that man has heaped on you!"

"The birds will be only a first instalment," said the Vicar,—and then there were more quips and quirks about that. It was presumed by Mr. Fenwick that the second instalment would be the first pheasants shot in October. But the second instalment came before September was over in the shape of the following note:—

"Turnover Park, 20th September, 186—.

"The Marquis of Trowbridge and the Ladies Sophie and Carolina Stowte request that Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick will do them the honour of coming to Turnover Park on Monday the 6th October, and staying till Saturday the 11th."

"That's an instalment, indeed," said Mrs. Fenwick. "And now what on earth are we to do?" The Vicar

admitted that it had become very serious. "We must either go, and endure a terrible time of it," continued Mrs. Fenwick, "or we must show him very plainly that we will have nothing more to do with him. I don't see why we are annoyed, merely because he is a Marquis."

"It won't be because he is a Marquis."

"Why then? You can't say that you love the old man, or that the Ladies Sophie and Carolina Stowte are the women you'd have me choose for companions, or that that soapy, silky, humbugging Lord St. George is to your taste."

"I am not sure about St. George. He can be everything to everybody, and would make an excellent bishop."

"You know you don't like him, and you know also that you will have a very bad time of it at Turnover."

"I could shoot pheasants all the week."

"Yes, with a conviction at the time that the Ladies Sophie and Carolina were calling you an infidel behind your back for doing so. As for myself I feel perfectly certain that I should spar with them."

"It isn't because he's a Marquis," said the Vicar, carrying on his argument after a long pause. "If I know myself, I think I may say that that has no allurement for me. And, to tell the truth, had he been simply a Marquis, and had I been at liberty to indulge my own wishes, I would never have allowed myself to be talked out of my righteous anger by that soft-tongued son of his. But to us he is a man of the very greatest importance, because he owns the land on which the people live with whom we are concerned. It is for their welfare that he and I should be on good terms

together; and therefore if you don't mind the sacrifice, I think we'll go."

"What;—for the whole week, Frank?"

The Vicar was of opinion that the week might be judiciously curtailed by two days; and, consequently, Mrs. Fenwick presented her compliments to the Ladies Sophie and Carolina Stowte, and expressed the great pleasure which she and Mr. Fenwick would have in going to Turnover Park on the Tuesday, and staying till the Friday.

"So that I shall only be shooting two days," said the Vicar, "which will modify the aspect of my infidelity considerably."

They went to Turnover Castle. The poor old Marquis had rather a bad time of it for the hour or two previous to their arrival. It had become an acknowledged fact now in the county that Sam Brattle had had nothing to do with the murder of Farmer Trumbull, and that his acquaintance with the murderers had sprung from his desire to see his unfortunate sister settled in marriage with a man whom he at the time did not know to be disreputable. There had therefore been a reaction in favour of Sam Brattle, whom the county now began to regard as something of a hero. The Marquis, understanding all that, had come to be aware that he had wronged the Vicar in that matter of the murder. And then, though he had been told upon very good authority,—no less than that of his daughters, who had been so informed by the sisters of a most exemplary neighbouring curate,—that Mr. Fenwick was a man who believed "just next to nothing," and would just as soon associate with a downright Pagan like old Brattle, as with any professing Christian, —still there was the fact of the Bishop's good opinion;

and, though the Marquis was a self-willed man, to him a bishop was always a bishop. It was also clear to him that he had been misled in those charges which he had made against the Vicar in that matter of poor Carry Brattle's residence at Salisbury. Something of the truth of the girl's history had come to the ears of the Marquis, and he had been made to believe that he had been wrong. Then there was the affair of the chapel, in which, under his son's advice, he was at this moment expending £700 in rectifying the mistake which he had made. In giving the Marquis his due we must acknowledge that he cared but little about the money. Marquises, though they may have large properties, are not always in possession of any number of loose hundreds which they can throw away without feeling the loss. Nor was the Marquis of Trowbridge so circumstanced now. But that trouble did not gall him nearly so severely as the necessity which was on him to rectify an error made by himself. He had done a foolish thing. Under no circumstances should the chapel have been built on that spot. He knew it now, and he knew that he must apologise. Noblesse oblige. The old lord was very stupid, very wrong-headed, and sometimes very arrogant; but he would not do a wrong if he knew it, and nothing on earth would make him tell a wilful lie. The epithet indeed might have been omitted; for a lie is not a lie unless it be wilful.

Lord Trowbridge passed the hours of this Tuesday morning under the frightful sense of the necessity for apologising;—and yet he remembered well the impudence of the man, how he had ventured to allude to the Ladies Stowte, likening them to—to—to——! It was terrible to be thought of. And his lordship remembered, too, how this man had written about the

principal entrance to his own mansion as though it had been no more than the entrance to any other man's house! Though the thorns still rankled in his own flesh, he had to own that he himself had been wrong.

And he did it,—with an honesty that was beyond the reach of his much more clever son. When the Fenwicks arrived, they were taken into the drawing-room, in which were sitting the Ladies Sophie and Carolina with various guests already assembled at the Castle. In a minute or two the Marquis shuffled in and shook hands with the two new comers. Then he shuffled about the room for another minute or two, and at last got his arm through that of the Vicar, and led him away into his own sanctum. "Mr. Fenwick," he said, "I think it best to express my regret at once for two things that have occurred."

"It does not signify, my lord."

"But it does signify to me, and if you will listen to me for a moment I shall take your doing so as a favour added to that which you have conferred upon me in coming here." The Vicar could only bow and listen. "I am sorry, Mr. Fenwick, that I should have written to the Bishop of this diocese in reference to your conduct." Fenwick found it very difficult to hold his tongue when this was said. He imagined that the Marquis was going to excuse himself about the chapel,—and about the chapel he cared nothing at all. But as to that letter to the Bishop, he did feel that the less said about it the better. He restrained himself, however, and the Marquis went on. "Things had been told me, Mr. Fenwick;—and I thought that I was doing my duty."

"It did me no harm, my lord."

"I believe not. I had been misinformed,—and I apologise." The Marquis paused, and the Vicar bowed. It is probable that the Vicar did not at all know how deep at that moment were the sufferings of the Marquis. "And now as to the chapel," continued the Marquis.

"My lord, that is such a trifle that you must let me say that it is not and has not been of the slightest consequence."

"I was misled as to that bit of ground."

"I only wish, my lord, that the chapel could stand there."

"That is impossible. The land has been appropriated to other purposes, and though we have all been a little in the dark about our own rights, right must be done. I will only add that I have the greatest satisfaction in seeing you and Mrs. Fenwick at Turnover, and that I hope the satisfaction may often be repeated." Then he led the way back into the drawing-room, and the evil hour had passed over his head.

Upon the whole, things went very well with both the Vicar and his wife during their visit. He did go out shooting one day, and was treated very civilly by the Turnover gamekeeper, though he was prepared with no five-pound note at the end of his day's amusement. When he returned to the house, his host congratulated him on his performance just as cordially as though he had been one of the laity. On the next day he rode over with Lord St. George to see the County Hunt kennels, which were then at Charleycoats, and nobody seemed to think him very wicked because he ventured to have an opinion about hounds. Mrs. Fenwick's amusements were, perhaps, less exciting, but she went through them with equanimity. She was taken to see

the parish schools, and was walked into the parish church,—in which the Stowte family were possessed of an enormous recess called a pew, but which was in truth a room, with a fireplace in it. Mrs. Fenwick thought it did not look very much like a church; but as the Ladies Stowte were clearly very proud of it she held her peace as to that idea. And so the visit to Turnover Park was made, and the Fenwicks were driven home.

"After all, there's nothing like burying the hatchet," said he.

"But who sharpened the hatchet?" asked Mrs. Fenwick.

"Never mind who sharpened it. We've buried it."

CHAPTER XXXVI

CONCLUSION

THERE is nothing further left to be told of this story of the village of Bullhampton and its Vicar beyond what may be necessary to satisfy the reader as to the condition and future prospects of the Brattle family.

The writer of these pages ventures to hope that whatever may have been the fate in the reader's mind of that couple which are about to settle themselves peaceably at Dunripple, and to wait there in comfort till their own time for reigning shall have come, some sympathy may have been felt with those humbler personages who have lived with orderly industry at the mill,—as, also, with those who, led away by disorderly passions, have strayed away from it, and have come back again to the old home.

For a couple of days after the return of the miller with his daughter and son, very little was said about the past;—very little, at least, in which either the father or Sam took any part. Between the two sisters there were no doubt questions and answers by the hour together as to every smallest detail of the occurrences at Salisbury. And the mother almost sang hymns of joy over her child, in that the hour which she had so much dreaded had passed by. But the miller said not a word;—and Sam was almost equally silent. "But it be all over, Sam?" asked his mother, anxiously one day. "For certain sure it be all over now?"

"There's one, mother, for whom it ain't all over yet;—poor devil."

"But he was the—murderer, Sam."

"So was t'other fellow. There weren't no difference. If one was more spry to kill t'old chap than t'other, Acorn was the spryest. That's what I think. But it's done now, and there ain't been much justice in it. As far as I sees, there never ain't much justice. They was nigh a-hanging o' me; and if those chaps had thought o' bringing t'old man's box nigh the mill, instead of over by t'old woman's cottage, they would 'a' hung me;—outright. And then they was twelve months about it! I don't think much on 'em." When his mother tried to continue the conversation,—which she would have loved to do with that morbid interest which we always take in a matter which has been nearly fatal to us, but from which we have escaped,—Sam turned into the mill, saying that he had had enough of it, and wouldn't have any more.

Then, on the third day, a report of the trial in a county newspaper reached them. This the miller read all through, painfully, from the beginning to the end, omitting no detail of the official occurrences. At last, when he came to the account of Sam's evidence, he got up from the chair on which he was sitting close to the window, and striking his fist upon the table, made his first and last comment upon the trial. "It was well said, Sam. Yes; though thou be'est my own, it was well said." Then he put the paper down and walked out of doors, and they could see that his eyes were full of tears.

But from that time forth there came a great change in his manner to his youngest daughter. "Well, Carry," he would say to her in the morning, with as

much outward sign of affection as he ever showed to any one; and at night, when she came and stood over him before he lifted his weary limbs out of his chair to take himself away to his bed, he turned his forehead to her to be kissed, as he did to that better daughter who had needed no forgiveness from him. Nevertheless, they who knew him,—and there were none who knew him better than Fanny did,—were aware that he never for a moment forgot the disgrace which had fallen upon his household. He had forgiven the sinner, but the shame of the sin was always on him; and he carried himself as a man who was bound to hide himself from the eyes of his neighbours because there had come upon him a misfortune which made it fit that he should live in retirement.

Sam took up his abode in the house, and worked daily in the mill, and for weeks nothing was said either of his going away or of his return. He would talk to his sisters of the manner in which he had worked among the machinery of the Durham mine at which he had found employment; but he said nothing for awhile of the cause which had taken him north, or of his purpose of remaining where he was. He ate and drank in the house, and from time to time his father paid him small sums as wages. At last, sitting one evening after the work of the day was done, he spoke out his mind. "Father," said he, "I'm about minded to get me a wife." His mother and sisters were all there and heard the proposition made.

"And who is the girl as is to have thee, Sam?" asked his mother.

As Sam did not answer at once, Carry replied for him. "Who should it be, mother;—but only Agnes Pope?"

"It ain't that 'un?" said the miller, surlily.

"And why shouldn't it be that 'un, father? It is that 'un, and no other. If she be not liked here, why, we'll just go further, and perhaps not fare worse."

There was nothing to be said against poor Agnes Pope,—only this, that she had been in Trumbull's house on the night of the murder, and had for awhile been suspected by the police of having communicated to her lover the tidings of the farmer's box of money. Evil things had of course been said of her then, but the words spoken of her had been proved to be untrue. She had been taken from the farmer's house into that of the Vicar,—who had, indeed, been somewhat abused by the Puddlehamites for harbouring her; but as the belief in Sam's guilt had gradually been abandoned, so, of course, had the ground disappeared for supposing that poor Agnes had had aught to do in bringing about the murder of her late master. For two days the miller was very gloomy, and made no reply when Sam declared his purpose of leaving the mill before Christmas unless Agnes should be received there as his wife;—but at last he gave way. "As the old 'uns go into their graves," he said, "it's no more than nature that the young 'uns should become masters." And so Sam was married, and was taken, with his wife, to live with the other Brattles at the mill. It was well for the miller that it should be so, for Sam was a man who would surely earn money when he put his shoulders in earnest to the wheel.

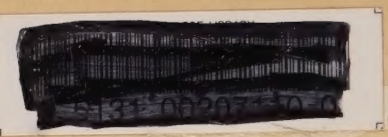
As for Carry, she lived still with them, doomed by her beauty, as was her elder sister by the want of it, to expect that no lover should come and ask her to establish with him a homestead of their own.

Our friend the Vicar married Sam and his sweet-

heart, and is still often at the mill. From time to time he has made efforts to convert the unbelieving old man whose grave is now so near to his feet; but he has never prevailed to make the miller own even the need of any change. "I've struv' to be honest," he said, when last he was thus attacked, "and I've wrought for my wife and bairns. I ain't been a drunkard, nor yet, as I knows on, neither a tale-bearer, nor yet a liar. I've been harsh-tempered and dour enough I know, and maybe it's fitting as they shall be hard and dour to me where I'm going. I don't say again it, Muster Fenwick;—but nothing as I can do now 'll change it." This, at any rate, was clear to the Vicar,—that Death, when it came, would come without making the old man tremble.

Mr. Gilmore has been some years away from Bullhampton; but when I last heard from my friends in that village I was told that at last he was expected home.

THE END.



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